

REVIEW

OF A BOOK ENTITLED,

"THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIANITY EXAMINED, BY
COMPARING THE NEW TESTA-
MENT WITH THE OLD,

BY GEORGE BETHUNE ENGLISH, A. M."

BY SAMUEL CARY,

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE CHAPEL, BOSTON.

Quæ mens tam dira, miserrime—
Impulit his cingi telis? Quo ruis?...VIRE.

Boston :

PUBLISHED BY ISAIAH THOMAS, JUN.

November, 1813.

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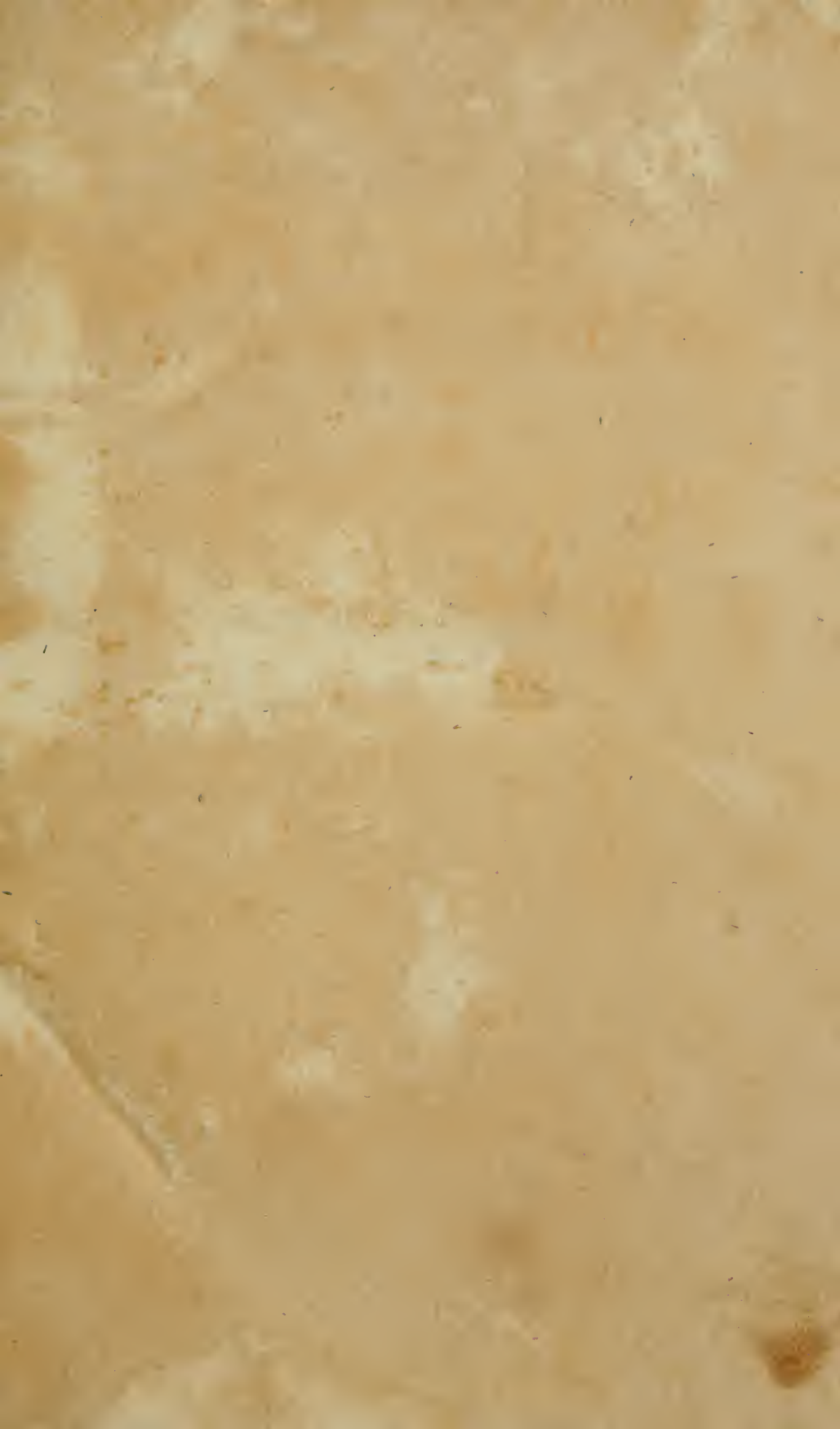


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District of Massachusetts, to wit :

District Clerk's Office.

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the sixteenth day of November, A. D. 1813, and in the thirty-eighth year of the Independence of the United States of America, Isaiah Thomas, junior, of the said district, has deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, *to wit* : " Review of a Book entitled, " the Grounds of Christianity examined, by comparing the New Testament with the Old, by George Bethune English, A. M. By Samuel Cary, one of the Ministers of the Chapel, Boston.

Quæ mens tam dira, miserrime—

Impulit his cingi telis ? Quo ruis ?—Virg."

In conformity to the act of the congress of the United States, intituled, " An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned ;" and also to an act intituled, " an act supplementary to an act, intituled, An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned ; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

WILLIAM S. SHAW { Clerk of the district
of Massachusetts.

I THINK it necessary to say in justice to myself that the whole of this Review was written and printed in four weeks. This is not, I am sensible, an apology for any of its errors in point of argument. But it may serve to excuse the mere faults of composition, &c. especially when it is considered, that some answer to Mr. ENGLISH's book was thought by many friends of Christianity to be indispensable, before the public attention to that work had subsided.

Boston, Nov. 17.

REVIEW.

SECTION I.

THE Christian religion, as it is well known to all believers, rests upon a rock of adamant and cannot be subverted by man. For this, under the care of divine providence, it is principally indebted to *infidelity*—to the severe scrutiny which it has been compelled to receive, and to an open and thorough discussion of its pretensions. There is nothing to excite alarm therefore in the publication of infidel opinions, if there is a reasonable presumption that the object is to discover truth; and if the author contents himself with stating what appears to him to be valid objections to Christianity, without descending to frivolous cavils or to slander. We ought rather to en-

courage these investigations, I speak in reference to their ultimate effect upon the cause of truth, because we know that the gospel is capable of being most completely defended. The arguments of infidelity were all displayed during the last century in every possible shape and by men of no ordinary skill. There really was nothing omitted, which could be supplied by metaphysical subtlety, or wit, or imagination, or vanity, or malice, to overthrow the gospel; and there certainly can be no presumption in saying, what is so well known to every well informed theologian, that all these arguments were distinctly met and refuted; and that infidelity, having been compelled to abandon one post after another, and been foiled at all its weapons, at length shrunk from the contest. For years the publication of an infidel work has been a rare occurrence.

It is another question how far the appearance of a work, which aims to destroy the divine authority of the gospel, is favourable to the public morals; or how far a man can be justified in placing in the hands of people who have no means of answering his arguments, a

book, which endeavours to unsettle their minds and to efface their religious principles, impressions and associations, without substituting any thing equally valuable in their place. That the belief and practice of Christianity is, in the present state of society, essential to public virtue and happiness ; that the peculiar obligations which it imposes upon its disciples to live well, are salutary ; that its consolations and hopes are in some situations of life the only means of saving men from despair ; that wherever it has been rightly understood, and has actually exerted its genuine influence, the condition of mankind has been so far improved—can be denied by no candid man whether believer or unbeliever. It would be *folly* to deny this, and accordingly thus much has generally been conceded, by those who have undertaken to show that the pretensions of Christ himself to be a divine messenger are without foundation. What motive then can be strong enough to justify an upright man in thus endeavouring to ruin the best comforts of his fellow citizens and hazarding the general peace of society ? Most certainly nothing but

his supreme regard for the honour of God and the cause of truth, and a deliberate and firm conviction that it is upon the whole his duty to expose what he believes to be errors dishonourable to God and injurious to his creatures. If this is his motive, it is, as far as it respects himself, a good one ; and however deplorable may be his mistake, he has a right to be heard and answered with respect. But before he has brought his mind into this state, we have a right to require that he should thoroughly understand the Christian religion and the mass of facts and arguments by which it is supported ;—that he should bestow upon it all that care, and labour, and perseverance, and fidelity, to which it is entitled by its own intrinsic importance, and its general reception, and the learning and virtue of its friends ; that he should fairly convince himself by a calm view of the consequences of this public opposition to the religion of his country, that he can do more good as a lover of God and man by the diffusion, than by the suppression or cautious avowal of his opinions.

There is also something further to be considered. Before this man can stand completely justified for an act of this dangerous tendency, we have a right to demand evidence *from the work itself* that he is in fact governed by this most sacred and paramount motive, and by nothing else. If he really has nothing in view but truth, it must appear by a generous and candid statement of the reasoning of his antagonists as well as his own ; by meeting what is unfavourable to him in all its force. There must be nothing studiously concealed or evaded, no polemical finesse, no arguing for the sake of victory, no magnifying of unimportant circumstances, no wilful misrepresentations. If he can produce any new facts he must disclose without reserve the sources from which they are drawn, and their evidence. If his arguments or conclusions only are new, and his mind is thus brought into competition with a host of other powerful minds, there ought at least to be an appearance of distrust and deference in delivering them ; there should be nothing offensively dogmatical and peremptory, because this

never fails to indicate an ignorant and a vain man. If what he delivers is not new, it ought to be frankly acknowledged; and if the reasons, which he thus deems worthy of being repeatedly brought into view, have been refuted, or attempted to be refuted, he must point out distinctly the particular parts of the reasoning of his opponents, which to his mind are unsatisfactory. And above all we have a right to demand that he should never forget the respect which he owes to that great body of men who are firm believers in Christianity, who have adopted it after the most deliberate and satisfactory investigation, to whom it is the source of unspeakable happiness, and whose love of truth and of the Supreme Being is, to say the least, as ardent as his own. His book must therefore be free from mere idle declamation, from an improper display of wit or ridicule, from malignant insinuations, from low abuse.

If all these marks of uprightness, of candour, and of humility are visible in the writings of an unbeliever in Christianity, we may regret that such a mind and such affections should

have wandered so far astray ; but we may not doubt his sincerity ; because there can be no stronger evidence of sincerity. If the reverse of all this is true, whatever may be his pretended devotion to God and truth, it is sufficiently plain that this is not the real motive of his conduct. He has acted from very different and very corrupt principles. He has deprived himself of the only plea, which can at all justify a systematic attempt to demolish the great support of public virtue ; and he deserves the strongest indignation of an insulted and injured community.

There is a vast difference between a public opposition to the Christian religion itself, and an attack on the particular system of either of the different parties among Christians ; and therefore the two cases are not to be determined by the same principles. In the disputes among men who acknowledge the divine authority of Jesus Christ, the great object is to ascertain what he did in fact teach, what is the real character of his religion, which among the contradictory theories that have been embraced by his followers are false and therefore

of dangerous tendency ;—and these disputes are justified by a maxim held in common by all believers, that it is of extreme importance to mankind that this revelation of the will of God should be rightly understood, and purified from error. When the views which are taken of the gospel by one particular sect, and which have impeded its practical good effects, are found to be erroneous ; more perfect views are immediately substituted in their place. A cloud passes off from this great light ; our faith becomes more rational, more firm, and more affecting ; and our practice, which is always determined by the strength of our faith or principles, becomes more correct and honourable. It is desirable that discussions of this sort should be as explicit and as public as is possible, because in this manner the discovery of truth as it is in Jesus becomes more generally interesting, and when discovered is more generally embraced. And the principal inconvenience which has been found to result from this spiritual warfare—the mutual animosities of violent men on different sides—is overbalanced by the immense

advantages conferred upon society by the diffusion of just sentiments of Christianity, and the influence of these just sentiments upon the public morals.

But when the attack is made upon the gospel itself, it is done with no intention or hope of substituting in its place a system better adapted to human virtue or felicity. The infidel knows perfectly well that if the evidence alleged in defence of Christianity as a divine revelation is insufficient to establish that claim, there is no other religion now existing which *can* support its pretensions to this character; and he knows also, I mean if he has information enough to entitle him to write upon the subject at all, that the obligations and sanctions of natural religion are far less effectual in reforming a vicious community than those of a religion believed to have proceeded from the Supreme Being. No person who has considered the state of the world before and since the promulgation of Christianity can have any doubt upon this point. The questions therefore which this man must settle with himself are these, whether it can be right for him to

endeavour to destroy what, though he may deem it to be an error, is at least a source of vast practical good to mankind; and whether since this thing which he believes to be error, has been held by millions of enlightened understandings as most sacred truth, there is not a strong presumption that his own opinion may have been inconsiderately formed, and that he may understand his subject too imperfectly to authorize a measure of so much hazard?

If it be said that this is giving up the argument *to authority*; and that if authority is to be taken as a guide, it ought to prevent a man from exposing the errors of an established theory among Christians, if he believes them to be errors, as well as from exposing Christianity; the answer is this. If the weight of authority is on the side of virtue, or of a religion favourable to virtue, and if opposition to that religion is manifestly injurious to virtue, then an upright man is bound, as it seems to me, on account of these consequences to give up his opposition, though he should retain his opinions. Now this is strictly applicable to

the case of infidelity, for it would be absurd to consider those very few individuals who may justly be esteemed fair and adequate judges of the subject as bearing any sort of proportion to the whole Christian world for eighteen centuries. But it is not applicable to a case of hostility to any views of the gospel received among its advocates, because these may be, and are perpetually discussed without affecting the general interests of virtue ; and because authority, as it respects numbers, weight, and reputation, is to be found both on the side of all these positions, and in opposition to them all.

I state these principles at length, because I shall have occasion to apply them to the work lately published by Mr. English, which I propose to review.

This book has attracted some notice, because the author is understood to have been a preacher of the gospel. He was approbated about eighteen months ago, by the Boston Association, and at that time was considered as manifesting more than common industry in the investigation of theological subjects, and

promising to be an able supporter of that religion which he has now solemnly renounced. He has since held the office of sub-librarian in the university of Cambridge, and as we are given to understand in the introduction to his book, has been studying very diligently the Jewish controversies with the Christians. It seems that in the college library he was fortunate enough to discover some rare tracts written in the learned languages, which contained the strength of the Jewish reasonings, and in his opinion were totally unknown in this country and in Europe, except to some few men of uncommon learning. The effect of this discovery upon his own mind was a firm conviction that the Christian system was not only without foundation, but was a mean and despicable system, hostile to the best interests of individuals and of society, and loaded with the monstrous guilt of oppressing and destroying millions of innocent people, who could not in justice to themselves become its converts. The indignation which he immediately felt that so vile a delusion should have been suffered so long to exist and to exercise such

detestable tyranny ; together with a desire of vindicating himself for some parts of his past conduct, which it seems were considered suspicious, and the intrinsic importance of the subject, were the motives which determined him to lay the result of his enquiries before the public.

The idea which is pretty distinctly conveyed in this work, that the author (who was supposed to possess talents, some learning, great industry, and, so far as was known to the world, a fair mind) had improved the facilities for investigating this subject which were supplied by his situation in the college library—had actually made important discoveries, and was able to produce arguments that had never been properly made known and considered, has caused his work to be sought for with considerable avidity. And yet so violent is the antecedent improbability that a young man should be able in eighteen months to possess himself of objections to Christianity, which had been completely overlooked, or basely neglected by its incomparably learned and pious defenders through a long course of cen-

turies—that this readiness to be deceived by such pretensions does seem a little extraordinary. Mr. English, it is true, asserts that these rare arguments have been kept concealed from the public eye by the fear of ecclesiastical tyranny, and have been handed down from age to age by the Jews in manuscript, and in languages that are not generally understood. But it is very well known, that notwithstanding the terrors of the inquisition in some countries, and the hostility of narrow minded men in others, the Jews have found means to make their objections known to the world; and the fact is, that the question between them and the Christians has been openly and thoroughly discussed. Mr. E. has himself quoted several Jewish writers who have distinguished themselves in this controversy, and he might have quoted many more; names that are not indeed familiar to the mass of unlearned Christians, but are sufficiently familiar to all who have had the curiosity to examine the subject for themselves.

It was also a matter of some surprise that these arguments, thus supremely important,

should have been discovered in the writings of a class of men, whose erudition, with some few exceptions, extends very little farther than the books of their own doctors; who have been for ages notorious for their perversions and extravagant explanations of their own scriptures, and who, as far as I am qualified to judge, have displayed more disingenuousness in controversy, more unworthy caviling, more eagerness to confound the corruptions of Christianity with the religion itself, more reluctance to meet their opponents on their proper ground and in full strength, than any other class of unbelievers. Mr. English however entertains a different opinion of these "venerable men" and of their writings.

It was no great disappointment therefore to persons tolerably versed in this subject, to find upon examining these arguments that there were none of them which had any just claim to originality. But it was with inexpressible astonishment and disgust that they recognized in these newly discovered Jewish objections, the very sentiments of Anthony Collins, a distinguished deist of the last centu-

ry, *expressed in his very language*; and this too by a gentleman who declares that “ he had terminated the controversy with the deists to his own satisfaction, and felt that their objections were not insurmountable.” The first seven chapters of this work, which comprehend the argumentative part of it, and are in fact the only part which is entitled to any serious consideration, are little more than a statement of the system of Collins and of the reasoning by which he defended it—a system which was completely exploded more than eighty years ago by some of the most able writers at that time in England. The object of this writer, as it is the object of Mr. English, was to show that Christianity rests solely upon the prophecies of the Old Testament, that these prophecies were not fulfilled by Christ and by the facts connected with him, and consequently that his religion is without foundation. This work excited uncommon attention in its day on account of the apparent novelty of the scheme and the great adroitness with which the argument was managed. It was very satisfactorily answered, and as we learn from Le.

land, to the confusion of the author, by Bishop Chandler in a tract of great learning, by Dr. Samuel Chandler, Dr. Sykes, Dr. Bullock, Mr. Whiston, and many others. Fabricius in his *Lux Evangelica* enumerates more than fifty of these answers. And it is a remark of Leland that "this attack against Christianity, though carried on with great art as well as malice, produced this advantage, that it gave occasion to a full and accurate examination into the nature, design, and extent of many of the Old Testament prophecies, and to the placing some difficult passages in a clearer light."

Now what are we to think of this author, who has thus ventured to deliver to the world as the result of a long and diligent study of unknown Jewish controversialists, the refuted and forgotten reasonings of an English deist, without saying one syllable of the source from which he obtained them, or of these fifty writers who put the whole subject at rest? How are we to reconcile this conduct with that passionate love of truth, that extreme eagerness to destroy popular delusions, by

which he professes to be governed? He may possibly say, that he has never pretended that these seven chapters contain the arguments of the rare Jewish books in the college library; that he has expressly acknowledged himself indebted to other writers as well as Jews. But what then are we to make of such language as this? “The author had terminated an examination of the controversy with the deists to his own satisfaction, that is, *he felt convinced that their objections were not insurmountable*, when he turned his attention to the ancient and obscure controversy between the Christians and Jews. After a long, thorough, and startling examination of their books, together with all the answers to them he could obtain from a library amply furnished in this respect, he was finally very reluctantly compelled to feel persuaded, by proofs he could neither refute nor evade, that how easily soever Christians might answer the deists, so called, *the Jews* were clearly too hard for them. Because *they set the Old and New Testament in opposition,*” &c. Now this opposition between the Old and New Testament, is pre-

cisely the subject of these seven first chapters. Again, "I do not claim to have originated *all* the arguments advanced in this book. A very considerable portion of them were selected and derived from ancient Jewish tracts, translated from Chaldee into Latin, very little known even in Europe, and not at all known there to any but the curious and inquisitive. And I hope that discerning men will be much more disposed to weigh with candour the arguments *herein offered*, when they consider that they are in many instances the reasonings of learned, ancient, and venerable men," &c. It is added, "*some few other arguments* were derived from other authors, and were taken from works, not so much known as I hope they will be;" and this addition I have no doubt was made for the sake of a subterfuge, in case the fatal secret should be detected. But who are these other authors? Can they be deists, those writers whose arguments are so far *from being insurmountable*? And if they are, can the words *some few arguments*, thus cautiously introduced, be meant to indi-

cate that large portion of the book in which its whole strength is collected ?

But why did not Mr. English frankly name the books from which he derived his objections? He knew that his language was adapted to create the impression, which has actually taken place, that his researches had brought to light new arguments. He knew that this impression, as far at least as this part of the book is concerned, was a false one ; and it surely is no proof of any man's integrity, that he should be willing to take advantage of a false impression created by himself to give interest and currency to his writings. If he had told his readers plainly that in his opinion the most successful opponent of Christianity was Collins, and the most unanswerable reasoning against it was contained in his book of *the grounds and reasons of the Christian religion* ; they would have known instantly where to find what had been said on the opposite side of the question. The greater number of Christians, if the book fell into their hands, would have felt no interest in it whatever. They would have been satisfied on being told, that

it contained a mass of reasoning, which was never considered formidable in its day, and had been sufficiently proved to be false. This would indeed have rendered the labour of the author fruitless, but it would have been honourable and manly. It would have proved him to be a lover of truth, superior to artifices that were unworthy of him. But now, when we look into this book for proof of the sincerity of his professions, and of his supreme love of God, and man, and truth—which as we have already seen is the sole motive that can justify a man in publishing a work of this character—the first thing which we meet, is this astonishing and to me inexplicable fact. I hope Mr. English will be able to account for his conduct in this particular, more satisfactorily than I can do it for him.

The object of the introductory chapter of this work is to vindicate the conduct of the author in publishing his sentiments thus openly. And accordingly he has advanced some sentiments of his own, and of Dr. Price, and of other writers, relating to free enquiry and free discussion, which are in themselves,

very correct, and perfectly applicable to questions agitated among Christians themselves, where the virtue of the community is not immediately affected, but have no sort of application to a case like his, where the general virtue and peace and felicity is put directly at hazard. It is all very true, that a man has a natural right to think for himself, and a natural right to speak as he thinks ; and the magistrate has no right to interfere with his thoughts or his public discussions, if they are not directly dangerous to the community, and perhaps not even in that case. But what does this prove ? Does it prove that a man ought to speak what he thinks, if he perceives that the moral consequences of thus speaking are infinitely pernicious ? Does it prove that he ought not *to compel himself* to withhold his opinions from the public eye, until he is satisfied that some important ultimate good will result from making them known ? Admitting however that Mr. E. had a right to publish a work of this nature ; if he would justify himself to a virtuous and enlightened community for what, to say the least, has the appearance

of an unwise and imprudent measure, he must allow us to apply to him, as to any other unbeliever, the principles which have been already laid down.

He professes himself to have acted under the influence of an ardent love of truth ; to have thoroughly examined the subject on which he writes, and to have qualified himself to judge rightly. He professes, also, to have deliberately considered the consequences of giving his work to the public, and appears firmly convinced that instead of doing a real injury to the cause of virtue, he has endeavoured to destroy a system which is the great impediment to virtue and the direct source of inexpressible misery. I see not but we must admit the sincerity of Mr. E. in making these declarations, unless we can find evidence from the work itself that he has mistaken his own motives. His supreme and undeviating love of truth has already been rendered somewhat suspicious ; let us see therefore if this suspicion can be done away or counterbalanced by the candour with which he reasons ; the respectful and modest manner in which his ex-

Extraordinary sentiments are advanced ; the care with which all misrepresentations, caviling, despicable witticisms, and slander, are avoided in his work.

Are we to consider it for instance as a proof of the candour and fairness of this gentleman, that after acknowledging himself indebted to a multitude of Jewish writers, to works actually printed and published, for his arguments against Christianity, he has ventured to assert, in the very face of his own acknowledgment and of notorious facts, that “ the world has all along been in *total error*, with regard to the reasons and motives which have prevented the Hebrew nation from receiving the system of the New Testament ? ” — that “ their adversaries have for a long time triumphed over them without measure, only because they have been suffered to do so *without contradiction* ? ” Is it a farther proof of his integrity, that without taking the smallest notice of the unequalled and most horrible depravity of the Jewish nation, as described in their own histories, or of the prophecies in which the sufferings they have endured were denounced upon them

centuries ago as the punishment of their crimes—without even hinting at the pacific character of the Christian religion, and its absolute prohibition of every species of persecution, and that benevolent injunction *to do good even to enemies*, which he takes care to remember in a subsequent part of his work—he has more than insinuated, that “*that system*,” not the mistakes and vices of its professed friends, but *the system itself*, “is justly chargeable with all those shocking cruelties, which *on account of it* have been inflicted on that people,” that “all its good moral effects are a mere drop of pure water in that ocean of Jewish and Gentile blood, which it has caused to be shed by embittering men’s minds with groundless prejudices?”—Or again, could it be a pure love of truth, which induced this writer—knowing as he did perfectly the convictions of a most respectable body of Christians that the doctrine is no part of their faith,—to state as an essential article of Christianity, that “God, the great and holy, went through all the infirmities of infancy, that he lived a mendicant in a corner of the earth, and

was finally scourged and hanged on a gibbet by his own creatures?" There is something remarkable in this last quotation. It was once very well understood that the author, while he retained his good opinion of Christianity, had convinced himself by a particular examination of the subject, that the opinion here expressed had no foundation in the scriptures. He ought not, therefore, to have followed the example of the Jewish theologians in fastening this false sentiment upon Christianity, merely for the sake of assisting him to assail it with success.

These are a few instances, out of a great number which I have remarked, in which this writer has failed either in the disposition or the power of reasoning correctly. Perhaps we may have better success in searching for proofs of his respect and forbearance for the firm and cherished convictions of his innumerable opponents. These proofs I suppose are to be found in the contemptuous manner in which we are told, that the founder of our religion, though a very well meaning man, was a weak and insane enthusiast! in the

coarse ridicule which is thrown upon his most solemn declarations, in the tone of affected pity in which he speaks of his sufferings, in his regret that the Jews should not have imputed his extravagances to *hallucination of mind*! instead of deeming the poor madman worthy of so severe a punishment as crucifixion. We are perhaps to find them in the abuse which he has thrown upon the character of St. Paul, one of the most magnanimous beings that ever adorned human nature, in the manner in which his best actions are distorted, and the detestable motives that are ascribed to him;—in the complacency with which he has quoted the slanders of Celsus and other infamous writers of antiquity;—in his comparison of the character, acts, and pretensions of the primitive Christians with those of the modern Shakers;—in the chapters which are devoted to show that the peculiar principles of the Christian morality are “useless to society, are an outrage to human nature, are directly fitted to discourage and debase a man, to degrade him in his own eyes

and those of others, and to plunge him in despair."

I am ashamed to quote more of this disgusting scurrility. It is indeed a new thing for sentiments of this kind to become current among Christians; and it is not quite easy to account for the entire change which appears to have taken place in so short a time in the mind of this author;—for his rapid descent from the regions of light and truth into this frightful abyss. It might have been expected that his former ardent attachment to the gospel, and his former habits and associations would have taught him at least to preserve the language of moderation and respect; and if it was necessary to expose the errors of his fellow men, to remember that these errors were inexpressibly dear to them. Even Paine and his brother deists, though they have thought proper to consider Christ as a mere human legislator, have never hesitated to acknowledge the immaculate excellence of his character, and his infinite superiority to any other law-giver who has ever existed; nor have they denied that the gospel, considered as a system

of moral wisdom, was more perfect, better adapted to human nature and to the interests of human society, than any other system devised by man. The Mahometans very sincerely respect the character of Christ, and receive and act upon many of his principles. The Jews alone, these new masters of Mr. English, these men, whose enmity to the gospel is bitter and implacable to a proverb, and whose writings against it have been for centuries the disgrace of literature, are capable of furnishing this scandalous collection of cavils, misrepresentations, and ribaldry. These are Mr. English's new and rare discoveries. It is heartily to be regretted that he did not suffer them to sleep with their authors in oblivion.

He may say, perhaps, that all this is no answer to his book. He shall have his answer in due time. But all this is a distinct answer to that part of his work in which he endeavours to justify the publication of his opinions. It serves to show, if I mistake not, that the only plea by which his conduct can be satisfactorily defended, his supreme regard to God

and to truth, is annihilated *by evidence from the work itself.*” “The author,” as we are informed, “has been told, that supposing the Christian system to be unfounded, yet it is reasonable to believe that the Supreme Being would view any attempt to disturb it with displeasure on account of its moral effects. But is this not something like absurdity? Can God have made it necessary that morals should be founded on delusion in order to be supported?” This latter sentence is not quite intelligible. Morals are founded on the circumstances and relations of life. The Christian morality, as well as all other systems, is so founded; and its peculiar value consists in being perfectly adapted to all these relations, and to make human beings happy who sustain them. One obligation to obey the moral precepts of Christianity, which from the nature of the thing cannot be entirely new, arises from their fitness to promote human happiness. But a stronger obligation arises from the belief that they are positively enjoined upon us by a Being who has the power of punishing us for our disobedience. The

question is, whether the Deity can be supposed to regard the efforts of that man with complacency who, presuming that this belief, this most powerful motive to virtue, is a delusion, should upon this presumption set himself to destroy it, at the risk of destroying its moral effects? This question it seems the friends of Mr. English very properly decided in the affirmative; and if he had been wise enough to follow their advice, he would have avoided, what he must now be prepared to encounter, the just indignation of that part of the community, whose most sacred feelings and principles he has thus shamefully insulted. He must have known that so gross an outrage would not be passed over in silence. He must have known that the friends of Christianity, that its ministers would not suffer these unfeeling calumnies to be thrown upon the character and faith of their Master, without scourging the slanderer. He knew that his book would be answered, and that if it was, those parts of it which prove the author's unworthiness would be distinctly pointed out to public scorn. He has even challenged this answer

in a tone of confidence, which is both astonishing and melancholy. It is indeed a subject of deep regret, that a young man of improved mind, of industrious habits and of respectable connexions, should thus forfeit by his own act the esteem of the wise and the virtuous ; should thus hang himself up upon a gibbet to be gazed at with shuddering curiosity, to be pitied and avoided.

This work is divided into nineteen chapters; the first of which, as has been stated, are employed to prove that Jesus Christ was not the Messiah pointed out in the prophecies of the Old Testament, because the distinctive characteristics, which the prophets declared would belong to the Messiah, were, in the opinion of this writer, certainly and evidently never found in him. As he considers the whole truth of Christianity, and its pretensions to be considered as a divine revelation, to be completely involved in this position, and as he has disposed of this to his entire satisfaction ; he proceeds in the following chapters, *upon the idea that Jesus was an impostor*, to remark upon certain traits in his character and

that of his apostles, upon their pretensions to supernatural aid, upon the causes of their success, upon the source from which their doctrines were probably derived, upon the authenticity of their writings, upon the nature and peculiar features and objects of their moral system ;—in all which he perceives the most ample confirmation of his opinion. It is not my intention to follow this writer through his whole nineteen chapters, because I sincerely think that it cannot be necessary to prove to an enlightened public that Jesus was not a deceived and insane enthusiast, or that his precepts are favourable to the moral improvement and felicity of mankind. I shall rather select from this mass of folly the parts which contain the real strength of the volume and are entitled to a serious answer. And if any thing on which Mr. E. could justly rely, is passed without proper notice, I hope it will rather be ascribed to a misapprehension of its real importance than to an unwillingness to meet it in its real force.

The second part of the book I consider as depending strictly upon the first ; or in other

words, if the author had been able to satisfy himself that Jesus was in truth the Messiah of the Old Testament, he probably would not have indulged himself in that unlicensed strain of censure with which he speaks of the works and doctrines of him and his apostles. He would have read the scriptures with better feelings and a more favourable eye. He would have considered the evidence which is produced by Christians in defence of the claims of their Master with more candour and impartiality. In this view of the subject, therefore, the important part of the book, is that which bears directly upon this principal question, *is Jesus or is he not the Messiah of the Old Testament?* To this question I shall confine myself in the following observations.

SECTION II.

THE principle which lies at the foundation of Mr. English's arguments relating to this question he has stated in the words of Collins. "Christianity is founded on Judaism and the New Testament upon the Old ; and Jesus of Nazareth is the person said in the New Testament to be promised in the Old, under the character and name of the Messiah of the Jews, and who *as such only claims the obedience and submission of the world.*"* If this is true, the question before us is of vital importance to our religion ; and though it could be proved, beyond the possibility of dispute, that Jesus did perform works utterly beyond the natural powers of man, and did speak words surpassing all human wisdom, and did display the most complete evidence that he acted by the authority of the Supreme Being ;—yet if we cannot distinctly perceive how the obscure language of the Hebrew prophets, uttered more than two thousand years ago, is applicable to

* Page 1.

the particular circumstances of his life, then, according to this theory, he is an impostor and his religion is false. If this were the only legitimate evidence of the divine authority of our faith, there would have been invincible obstacles to its success among mankind; because the predictions themselves, even if they had been literally fulfilled in Christ, were known and venerated by the Jewish nation alone. And that the dominion of the Messiah should extend among the Gentiles, is asserted with the utmost clearness in a variety of prophecies. It is probable too that if the faith of the Christian world at the present day depended solely upon this circumstance, it would be imperfect, infirm, and wavering; not however because there was no real coincidence between Christ and the predictions; but because it is now so extremely difficult to perceive all the points of this coincidence; because so many minute circumstances, which are necessary to a perfect understanding of the predictions, are totally unknown to us; because we know only the more prominent facts in the life and character of Christ himself, and

therefore cannot be certain whether even those parts of the Old Testament which at present seem inapplicable, were not strictly fulfilled in him ; because there are very great and sometimes insuperable difficulties in the language of the prophets, in their allusions, their abrupt transitions, their want of method, their views of futurity associated with views of their own time ; because many books which might have assisted us to develop their exact meaning are lost irrecoverably. It is obvious that this kind of proof, however striking it might have been to the Jews themselves in the time of our Saviour, and when the language of the prophets was more generally understood, is too imperfect and unsatisfactory to produce *of itself* that strong conviction which is necessary to make men practical Christians. And there arises from this fact a strong presumption, that if Christ and his religion were sent by God for the benefit of mankind, he would not have suffered it to rest solely upon a species of argument, which in a course of ages would necessarily lose so much of its force. It is improbable, to borrow the language of this

writer, "that God should delegate the mediator of a most important covenant to be proposed to all mankind without enabling him to give them clear and in reason indisputable proofs of the divine authority of his mission"—proofs that should satisfy not merely one particular nation, however privileged, but those who had never heard of the Jews or their religion.

But fortunately this round assertion of Mr. English and Mr. Collins is not true. The truth of Christianity does not depend *solely* upon our being able to perceive that the characteristic marks of the Messiah of the prophets were found in Jesus of Nazareth; and even if these gentlemen had succeeded in rendering their position at all probable, they would only have thrown a cloud around one of the principal columns which support our faith, without affecting the strength and majesty and ineffable brightness of the rest. Jesus of Nazareth claims the obedience and submission of the world because he was, what he declared himself to be, *a teacher sent from God*. This fact he established

by all the evidence of which it was capable, by performing works in the face of the world which demonstrated that God was with him; by teaching a religion which was worthy of God, by exhibiting to mankind an example of the most perfect human excellence. To these circumstances he did most distinctly appeal in his addresses to the Jews; and it is a fact, which these writers ought not to have overlooked, that the apostles, who succeeded him, in all their reasonings with the Gentiles, which have been handed down to our time, did place their religion upon these proofs and that of the resurrection. He declared himself it is true, to be the Messiah of the prophets, and he *was* the Messiah, as will be shown in its place; but neither he nor his apostles ever used this as a proof of his divine authority, to any other people than the Jews, because it was neither intelligible nor important to any other people.

I say this without the smallest fear of being contradicted by evidence from the scriptures, though I perceive, with some astonishment, that Mr. E. has thought proper to assure his

readers that the reverse of all this is true;— that this argument was used indiscriminately to Gentiles and Jews, and even with more success with the former than with the latter. In proof of this we are referred to the sermons of Peter and others, and to the speeches of Paul before Felix and Agrippa.* The sermons alluded to were delivered after the resurrection of Christ, in the city of Jerusalem, to a Jewish assembly, one of them on the steps of the temple. The arguments were addressed to believers in the Jewish religion only, as any one who turns his eye upon the place may perceive in a moment. “And there were dwelling at Jerusalem,” says the historian, Acts ii. 5, “*Jews*, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, (that is, the multitude of these devout Jews, of different countries) and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.” Could Mr. E. be ignorant that at this time the apostle did not feel himself at liberty to preach the gospel to the Gentiles? Could he have mistaken the very-

* Page 31.

first words of this address ? “ Ye men of Judea and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you and hearken to my words.” It is remarkable that among the following verses we have this passage, which shows that even in an address to his own countrymen the apostle did not place the divine authority of Christ *solely* upon the prophecies of the Old Testament. “ Ye men of Israel, hear these words. . . Jesus of Nazareth, a man *approved of God among you by miracles*, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know,” &c. The other sermon of Peter, which followed the cure of the lame man, begins thus. “ Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this ? ”—and it proceeds to display the peculiar wickedness of that nation in rejecting the holy prophet whom the God of their fathers had sent them.

The further proofs that this argument from the prophecies was used to convince Gentiles, are the speeches of Paul before Felix the Roman governor and Herod Agrippa the *Jewish* tetrarch. Is it possible that the world has been so long in an error with respect to these

speeches? Were they indeed pronounced for the sake of inducing Felix and Agrippa to embrace Christianity? The real truth is, the apostle was summoned before these magistrates by certain Jewish accusers to answer to a charge of preaching doctrines, which were contrary to the Jewish scriptures. He defended himself by proving, and as it appears to the satisfaction of his judges, that he taught no other things than Moses and the prophets did say should come. The reader must judge for himself whether these proofs have established the position for which they are collected. And yet they are so perfectly conclusive in the opinion of Mr. E. that he ventures to say, "I am ashamed at being thus long engaged in showing what must be self-evident, and did I not fear being further tedious to my readers I would undertake to bring passages from the New Testament where the meaning and intention of the writers is obvious, in such abundance, as would immediately and entirely put the hypothesis of our opponents out of countenance!"*

* Page 31.

But it seems that Mr. English and Mr. Collins, will permit us to derive no advantage from the fact, that Christ and his apostles did place their religion on other grounds than the prophecies, even if this should be allowed us. They assert that the miracles, for instance, which are "said to have been wrought by Jesus and his apostles, in behalf of Christianity, can avail nothing in the case." Why so? "Because miracles can never render a foundation valid, which is in itself invalid, can never make a false inference true, can never make a prophecy fulfilled which is not fulfilled."* There is a surprising feebleness in this sophism. Miracles can never make a false inference true! Can *prophecy* make a false inference true? Can *any thing* make a false inference true, or an invalid foundation valid? Miracles are designed to prove this one point and nothing more, that he who performs them acts by the authority of the Supreme Being. If the miracles are genuine they establish this fact incontestibly; they are the most complete and satisfactory proof in

nature. And if it can be once proved in this manner that Christ acted by the authority and assistance of God, then we have an indisputable right to infer that what he delivered as a message from the Deity was true; and as such it ought to be received. Miracles do not, it is conceded, prove *directly* that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, but they prove the first step in a process which terminates in this conclusion; that is, they prove that Christ was divinely authorized to teach mankind, and if so, whatever he without doubt did teach, was true; if then he did teach that he was the Messiah of the prophets, and did cite the very predictions in which he was distinctly pointed out, it follows that his claim was a good one and that the predictions thus quoted did establish that claim. Now have these gentlemen really the vanity to believe that they can set aside this irrefragable argument, by telling us that the prophecies themselves are in their hands, and that they are as competent judges of their relevancy to Christ as he himself could be? Can it be true that they at this remote period, when so many things which

are necessary to a perfectly correct judgement are buried in oblivion, and with their imperfect knowledge of a language, which at best is imperfectly understood even by the learned, are competent to pronounce on a question of this nature, in direct contradiction to the most solemn assurances of a man, who was invested by God with the gifts of his Spirit, and was approved to be of God by his miracles? If the prophecies were so clearly inapplicable to Jesus of Nazareth, that any person of common sense, comparing them with the history of his life and character, would be compelled to say at once, this cannot be the man; there might, perhaps, be some pretence for the objection. But they well know that the prophecies do not stand in this predicament. They know that many enlightened understandings can perceive a most wonderful coincidence between these facts and these predictions, and the case therefore is simply this.—A volume of ancient prophecies is capable of being interpreted in different senses. A man who imagines himself better informed than his contemporaries has thought proper to adopt one

of these senses. The rest of the world have adopted the other, in which they are completely justified by the known sentiments of one who had the power of working miracles. Let common sense say which party is most likely to be in the right.

"We find," continues this author, "from the New Testament, that all the recorded miracles of Jesus could not make the Jews believe him to be the Messiah, when they thought that he did not answer the description of that character given by the prophets; on the contrary they procured him to be crucified for appearing to be, what to them he appeared plainly not to be."* It is much to be regretted that a writer, who claims to be seriously attended to, should express himself in a manner thus unpardonably loose and indefinite. The persons who procured Jesus to be put to death were not the great body of the Jewish people, but a few of their leading men; and they did it precisely for this reason, because they saw that the people were convinced that he was the Messiah *on account of his*

* Page 7.

miracles. It appears from the New Testament, to which Mr. E. refers us, that Christ had made himself generally known throughout the country ; that the Jews, who were at that time in full expectation of the promised Messiah, flocked with extreme eagerness to receive his instructions ; that they saw his miracles with astonishment, and at length began to ask themselves—*when the Christ cometh will he do more miracles than these ?* Great numbers accordingly believed on him, and even the magistrates, the chief priests and elders, the scribes and Pharisees, were at first disposed to acknowledge claims that were so powerfully defended, and would have supported him with all their influence. But when they saw that he explained the prophecies in a sense totally different from their own ; and that if he was correct their dominion over the minds of the people, and their supreme right to interpret the scriptures was at an end, they at once from mere inflamed jealousy and hatred resolved to destroy him. They effected their purpose with extreme difficulty and by stratagem, on account of the estimation which

these very miracles had given him with the multitude.

Mr. E. would represent the Jews (he means the leaders of the Jews) as procuring the death of Jesus because they saw plainly that his character did not correspond with the prophecies; whereas he ought to have said that they procured his death, among other reasons, because his character did not correspond with their favourite *interpretation* of the prophecies. This would have placed the subject upon its proper footing, and would have shown it to be the case which has just been stated—the case of different parties holding different opinions on the same subject, where the only question is, which of them had the strongest claim to be credited? Jesus taught that the prophets had foretold with the utmost clearness the sufferings as well as the glory of the Messiah; and to establish this point with the Jews, who did not believe it possible, was the object of his constant references to the scriptures. The Jewish doctors, on the other hand, denied this state of suffering, and endeavoured, as Mr. E. has done, *to explain*

away the predictions which directly assert it. Their error consisted in denying the ability of a divinely assisted and inspired man to understand those scriptures on which he founded his claim to be received as their Saviour; and his right to contradict their darling though groundless prejudices.

But, says this writer, surely the Jews must be allowed to have understood their own scriptures; books held by them in the most exalted veneration and preserved with the most scrupulous care. And yet there is no fact relating to the ancient history of the Jews more completely established, than that at the time of our Saviour the real sense of the writings of Moses and the prophets, and the real character of their religion was so entirely buried and lost in the mass of traditional explications, commentaries, paraphrases, handed down from generation to generation by professed expounders of the law—that in truth these Jewish doctors were very incompetent judges of this subject and their opinions were of little authority. Now Jesus, even if we were to place the fact of his divine inspiration entirely out of

sight; if we were to consider him merely as a human being possessing the ordinary means of acquiring knowledge, was born a Jew, was trained up in the Jewish religion, was familiar with their scriptures, is acknowledged by this writer himself to have been devoted to habits of retirement and contemplation, was able at twelve years old to discuss subjects relating to the law with priests, who were astonished at his wisdom and answers; and no possible reason therefore can be assigned why he was not at least as well qualified to explain the prophecies as any of his antagonists. When in addition to this, however, we consider the works which he performed, and the effects which these works produced upon those who saw them, it seems absurd to put the authority of the scribes in competition with his.

The effect of the miracles of Jesus, I must be allowed to repeat, was the conversion of the considerate and unprejudiced part of the people to his opinions. And after his death and resurrection, when that fact had made the language of the prophets relating to his glorified state more intelligible, and when the miracu-

lous powers were conferred upon the apostles ; the consequence was, that vast multitudes of Jews, convinced by what they saw that God was with them, did acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, that is, they were satisfied that the apostolical interpretation of the prophecies was true, and that of the scribes was false. Indeed it is a barefaced violation of historical truth to insinuate, that Christianity had little or no success among these people, who are said to be the best judges of its pretensions. "Thou seest brother," said the elders of the church to Paul, at Jerusalem, Acts xxi. 20, "*how many thousands of Jews* there are who believe, and they are all zealous of the law." And if the men in power rejected it, and succeeded in persuading the greater part of the nation to be of their side, there is no difficulty in accounting for it ; if we consider how ardently they must have desired the destruction of a man, who had openly denounced them, and their traditions, and their morals, and how little they could hope to gain by his success ; and if we consider, also, the vast influence which they had acquired by their situation as

expounders of the sacred books of the law, and the profound ignorance of every thing but their expositions in which the people were held.

What then becomes of the assertion of these writers, that "miracles are no absolute proof of the truth of Christianity,"* or of the divine mission of a prophet? Do they forget that the divine mission of Moses was supported by this evidence? That the Jewish religion itself rested upon this evidence? If they do, let them turn to the fourth chapter of Exodus and read what follows. "And Moses said, but behold they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice, for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee. And the Lord said unto him what is that in thy hand, and he said a rod, and he said cast it on the ground, and he cast it on the ground and it became a serpent and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand and caught it and it became a rod in his hand; *That they may*

* Pages 8, 9.

believe that the Lord God of their fathers—hath appeared unto thee.—And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel, and Aaron did the signs in the sight of the people, *and the people believed.*” But we are told that the Jews were instructed to give no credit to a man who should exhibit “signs and wonders, that is, miracles,” in proof of his divine mission. There is some dexterity in thus confounding *signs and wonders*, which are mere artificial tricks, entirely within the power of man, and *real miracles*, which no man can perform unless God be with him. The question is not whether juggling tricks are good evidence of the divine authority of a prophet; but whether real miracles are so, such miracles as restoring a dead man to life, who has been dead four days, feeding five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, making a tempestuous sea calm with a single word? The Jews were required to reject a man who should endeavour to entice them into idolatry, even though he should display astonishing efforts of his art; because, as they were liable

in this manner to be deceived, it was necessary to have some proof or test—and the falsehood of his doctrine was to be that proof—that what he performed were juggling tricks and not miracles. It is a common artifice of infidelity to confound these two things, which are essentially distinct; and to endeavour to embarrass the subject by associating the works of Christ with those of the Egyptian necromancers, and Appollonius and Vespasian, and the Romish saints, and the Abbe Paris.* But before they presume to ask whether the miracles of the Abbe Paris are a proof of his divine mission, they must first set themselves about the vain labour of proving that the Abbe Paris ever wrought miracles. Their error seems to be founded upon the idea that *real miracles can be wrought* for the purpose of deception. Now I am convinced that nothing in nature can be more self evident, than that if the Deity ever entrusts this stupendous power to any human being, that being is commissioned by him to teach mankind what is true. There is no idea which is so instantly repelled

* See page 124.

by the mind, none which is more appalling, than that he should permit the laws of nature to be violated in defence of a falsehood.

The last resort of Mr. E. is the bold step of denying that Christ did perform real miracles and that the books in which they are recorded are authentic. As this is totally foreign from the point now under consideration, that Christianity was placed by Christ and the apostles on no other footing than the prophecies; I shall only observe, that if the books of the New Testament are not genuine, or at least if the facts recorded there are not true, there is no credit to be given to history. Nothing which took place farther back than the last century, nothing indeed which we have not ourselves actually seen, can be a part of our knowledge. If the vipers of infidelity would break their teeth against a file, let them gnaw the mighty works of Jones and Lardner. No man who attacks the authenticity of the scriptures can be entitled to a reply, till he has successfully encountered these great men, and torn the imperishable laurels from their brows, and wrested—that weapon, at

which such an enemy should tremble—the spear of Ithuriel, from their hands.*

If I am right in these remarks, it appears in opposition to the fundamental principle of Mr. English and Mr. Collins, that miracles are in themselves a good and sufficient proof of the divine mission of Jesus Christ; that Christianity was in fact put upon this proof

* I recommend to the consideration of the reader the following paragraphs of Gilbert Wakefield.

“To this argument against the resurrection of Jesus,” his miracles, &c. “various answers might be instituted; but I shall confine myself to one only, which appears to my mind incapable of confutation upon any principle of philosophy or experience; and will indeed admit of no dispute, but upon positions subversive of all historical testimony whatsoever, and introductory of universal scepticism.

The numerous circumstances interspersed through the *Gospel narratives* and in the *Acts* of the Apostles, appertaining to the geography of countries, the position of rivers, towns, and cities, public transactions of much notoriety in those days; the dress, customs, manners, and languages of nations and individuals; political characters of eminence and their conduct, with a vast multiplicity of detached occurrences and facts, not necessary to be specified at large, challenge (to speak with moderation) as large a portion of credi-

by its founder and his apostles ; and that this was the real cause of its success among the Jews. But certainly, say these gentlemen, Jesus did claim to be the Messiah, and as such to be received by his countrymen ; and it certainly is a prominent article of your religion that he was so. The gentlemen are right. And I should have no doubt that he was the Messiah of the prophets ; even if I could not clearly discern how many or all the prophetic writings, which have descended to our time, were in their strict sense verified in him. I

bility to these books, considered in the light of *historical* testimonials, as can be claimed for any writings whatever, received as genuine, and equally ancient and multifarious. Now no mean presumption arises in favour of the most *extraordinary* transactions, also, blended in the same texture of narrative by historians of so credible a character with respect to the rest of their relations ; but, when these *extraordinary facts* are found to have so intimate an incorporation with the *common* and unsuspecting occurrences of these histories so as to admit of no detachment, but to stand or fall with the main body of the compositions ; I cannot see how any historical probability of the authenticity of these extraordinary events can rise higher, than in such an instance."

should believe, in that case, that Jesus understood these writings better than I can possibly do ; that the argument was applied more effectually to the views and feelings of Jews, who were to be drawn from the religious principles in which they had been educated, than it could be applied to me ; that the probability was infinitely greater that the writings which are in my hands should have been corrupted either by time or villany, or that they should have been perplexed with insurmountable difficulties by the multitude of interpretations applied to them in different ages and by ignorant or interested writers, or that the language should become obscure, many of the expressions lose their real signification, many of its allusions become inexplicable, and thus that I should be deprived of the power of deciding justly upon the subject—than that the vast variety of considerations by which the fact of the miracles is nearly demonstrated should be all a delusion. I am now ready, however, to meet these writers on their own ground, and to show, in opposition to their second fundamental principle, that *the*

prophecies, so far as they are clear and intelligible, were literally accomplished in Jesus Christ.

It is here necessary, in order to avoid confusion and caviling, to state distinctly what points we are bound as Christians to prove, and what we are not bound to prove. In the first place, we are not bound to show that all the passages of the prophetic writings, which Christian divines, commentators, &c. have chosen to apply to Jesus, are real predictions of the Messiah. No doubt much useless labour and much injudicious zeal has been expended, in endeavouring to make the scriptures speak a language on this subject, which is not their own. Many texts have been collected, which probably are no prophecies at all, and many, which are prophecies, referred probably to certain distinguished characters among the Jews, and to the political state of that people before the coming of Christ, and not to any thing which is to take place, or has taken place, subsequent to that period. To reconcile these texts with what they are adduced to prove, it has been found necessary to have

recourse to *double senses*, and to typical and allegorical explanations. And it is true, that insuperable difficulties have arisen out of this mode of treating the subject, of which unbelievers have not failed to take advantage, and sometimes with great success. I have no more faith in this scheme of double senses, than Mr. E. can have, and I should have no difficulty in conceding to him—that if there were no prophecies applicable to Jesus of Nazareth, except such as had been *previously* fulfilled in their *real* sense, and were fulfilled by him only in a *spiritual* or *mystical* sense, the whole argument from prophecy is of no value as an evidence of Christianity, and ought therefore to be abandoned. But we are not yet reduced to this extremity, and to avoid it, we must lay entirely out of the question, those prophecies, which are doubtful, those which are unintelligible, and those, which without dispute were fulfilled by other men, and in other times.

In the second place, we are not obliged to prove that all those prophecies, which are acknowledged to relate to the Messiah, have

been already fulfilled by Jesus Christ. We know, that the great purposes of God, relating to the improvement of mankind, are matured slowly, and by the instrumentality of natural means. Ages are suffered to pass away, before the principal effects of certain events and certain states of society begin to be perceptible. The objects for which they take place, and to which, by the control of Providence, they all tend, are involved in impenetrable mystery, till time gradually unfolds them. There is no reason to believe, therefore, that if the Supreme Being had determined to reform and bless mankind by sending to them a special messenger, he would deviate from the common course of his government, and cause all the possible good effects of this mission to take place miraculously and at the same period. On the contrary, if there were no prophecies in existence to determine the manner in which a work of this magnitude would be accomplished ; if we were to judge only from past experience, and by the aid of common sense, it would be most rational to think that the reformation and felicity of mankind would be

effected after a long course of ages, by such means as are adapted to human nature in its present state ;—that as the only method, by which beings constituted as we are can be made virtuous without a miracle, is a course of moral discipline, some such method would be adopted by this benevolent messenger to fulfil the object of his mission ;—a method, in which *motives* and not *force* would be employed to influence human conduct, and in which time must be allowed to intervene between causes and their effects, between one stage of improvement and another.

Now this is precisely what we are taught to expect by the prophecies of the Old Testament. They speak, as we are all agreed, of this messenger, this Messiah, a prophet favoured by God above all men, who was to be the light, glory, and joy of all nations ; who was to be entrusted with the great work of establishing the worship of the one living and true God over the whole earth, and of producing a state of universal righteousness, peace, and felicity. Take then whatever period of the world you choose, past or future, for the advent of the

Messiah, and the commencement of his work, it is obvious, that if the world is constituted as it is now, a vast period of time must elapse before it is completed, and the Messiah enjoys his triumph. Let us consider a moment what this work is. The Jews, the most stiffnecked and incorrigible race of men that ever came from the hands of the Creator, are to be made sensible of their errors and repent of their hostility to the Christian religion, and in consequence are to be gathered from all nations under heaven to the country of their ancestors. The Gentiles, of all kindreds, and tongues, and lands, are to be enlightened and reformed; to abandon their idolatry and execrable superstitions, and worship the supreme God as disciples of Christ. The bad effects of ambition, pride, lust, and all the corrupt passions of the heart, are to be done away, and the passions themselves to be restrained, before peace and righteousness can be universal. Can it be necessary to say that this is not a work to be executed by a mere political prince during the term of his natural life?

It is not a little surprising that the Jewish

teachers, who are reputed to have studied their sacred books with great attention, or indeed that any considerate person whatever, should refer a succession of events, which from their nature must extend through many ages and many generations, to the reign of a single man on earth. Yet this is the principal point in Mr. English's book, the hinge, if I may so speak, on which it turns—the post, at which he takes his stand, and bids defiance to his adversaries. All these prophecies, says he, relate to the Messiah ; they must be fulfilled by him ; but they have not been fulfilled by Jesus Christ, and therefore he cannot be the Messiah.* But the fact is, the scriptures are not at variance with philosophy and experience on this point. They do not say that the coming of the Messiah, and the completion of his work, and his ultimate triumph shall be *cotemporaneous*. They do not teach what upon human principles we know to be impossible. They say, as Christians do, that the instrument of this scheme for the improvement of mankind should be a great prophet,

* Page 11, note.

a preacher of righteousness, who should appear in the world and begin his work under such circumstances of humility, that he should be despised and rejected ;—that he should be a sufferer and be put to death ;—that notwithstanding this, his kingdom, or, which is the same thing, the doctrines which he taught, with their appropriate motives and sanctions, should gradually advance in the world, and subdue its enemies; and acquire influence and spread itself; till in due time it should change the hearts of all nations and make them blessed. It is to this future triumphant state of Christianity, that all those splendid predictions, which speak of Jesus as a victorious king, are without question to be referred, and in which they will be fulfilled. - We cannot therefore be required to show in direct opposition to the scriptures that all these things, which are hereafter to take place, have already taken place. If we can prove that those predictions relating to the Messiah, which were intended to be accomplished *up to our time*, are literally verified by Christ and his religion, it is all, that, as believers, we are bound to prove.

In the third place, we are not, in my opinion, obliged to prove, that all the passages taken out of the Old Testament and applied to Christ by the writers of the New, are genuine predictions of him, or that they are the strongest proofs which could have been supplied by the scriptures. It is true, that the apostles, who so applied these passages, were qualified by God to teach the Christian religion to mankind, and had the power of working miracles in proof of their divine authority ; and if it could appear that the interpretation of the whole Jewish scriptures was part of the object for which they were thus endowed with supernatural gifts ; and if it could also appear that these quotations were proofs on which they relied, on which they rested their cause ; then there would be a strong presumption that they were right, even though their reasoning should seem to us, at this distance of time, vague and inconclusive. But it does not appear that they did in all cases allege these passages as absolute, independent proofs, in which the strength of their cause consisted, or that they were any farther concerned with

the Old Testament, than as it enabled them to convince the Jews that there was nothing in the character of Christ, which was utterly irreconcilable with the scriptures. The Jews, as we have seen, were in eager expectation of the Messiah. They entertained peculiar and mistaken notions of his character, derived either from ancient tradition, or the expositions of their own teachers ; they had been taught to believe that certain texts were predictions relating to him which probably were not so ; and these notions and prejudices were strong and deep rooted. It was the business of the apostles, therefore, to show them that even if these texts did refer to the Messiah, they were strictly applicable to Jesus, and therefore upon their own principles they ought to receive him. For instance, we may presume that there was at that time a general belief that a state of things similar to that described by the prophet Joel would take place at the coming of the Messiah. The apostle Peter, without determining whether this general belief was well or ill founded, might very safely say, “you expect that God will pour

out his Spirit; see, God has poured out his Spirit, and a state of things corresponding to the description of Joel has actually taken place." If the apostles had never employed other reasoning than these addresses to the professed principles of their hearers, they would no doubt have placed their religion upon an imperfect foundation. But, after having established their own authority and that of their Master by miracles, having displayed the fact of his resurrection, having shown that he came to them with stronger proofs of his divine mission than any preceding prophet, it was right that they should endeavor in this manner to remove certain mere prejudices against him, which would otherwise have been insurmountable.

Some of these passages are quoted as illustrations, or are applied to events, of which they are not indeed prophetic, but to which they correspond, others are probably real prophecies; some are applied literally, others figuratively. There is an obvious distinction between these cases; and, by attending carefully to this distinction, we keep en-

tirely clear of the question, whether the apostles, in this respect, were or were not infallible. If it were true, as Mr. English asserts, that they were all indiscriminately adduced and applied *as prophecies* concerning Jesus, when in fact they were not prophecies, then it would be a good argument that they were not divinely inspired. But the passages in question are not uniformly cited in this manner, nor are they used as independent and conclusive evidences of the truth of Christianity;—and whatever becomes of their integrity in citing them by allusion, &c. there is no doubt that they perfectly understood the nature and real value of their own reasonings. On this subject Mr. E. is weak and frivolous, beyond what is common in the antagonists of Christianity. “If these prophecies,” says he, meaning these *passages*, which are not prophecies, nor adduced as such, “are only urged by the apostles *as proofs to the Jews*, and intended only as proofs founded on the mistaken meanings of the Old Testament *of some Jews, of their time*, what sense is there in appealing upon all occasions to the prophets, and recom-

mending the reading and search of the Old Testament for the trial and proof of what was preached?"* There seems to be much good sense, and much judgement in appealing to the prophets on all occasions when they were addressing Jews ; because the authority of the prophets was acknowledged on both sides to be the only proper mode of determining the question. There was much good sense too in removing the prejudices of " some Jews of their time," founded on certain passages of scripture, and thus preparing their minds to receive the great body of evidence in proof of Christianity, by showing that even if these texts referred to the Messiah, there was nothing in the character of Jesus which contradicted them. We know not on what particular acknowledged prophecies of the Old Testament the principal arguments of Christ and his apostles were founded. A very small part of what they delivered was committed to writing and has descended to our time ; we therefore only know generally that they did appeal to Moses and the prophets, and did

* Page 81.

expound all those things which related to Jesus. It is by no means probable, however, that the few citations from the Old Testament, which are found in the New, were considered by those who used them, as the most prominent or convincing proofs of their religion.

This writer is very pleasant upon the theory, that these quotations were made in some instances as descriptive, not prophetic, of existing facts; which with singular facetiousness he terms "an accommodating principle of accommodation." He will not permit us, with Sykes, Campbell, and other distinguished critics, to consider the form in which the quotations are sometimes introduced, and which is rendered in the common version, *that it might be fulfilled*, as equivalent to this language, *in thus the saying of the prophet was verified*; because forsooth the learned Dr. Marsh and others have pronounced that explanation to be untenable. But as the learned Dr. Michaelis and others think it *is* tenable, the affair seems to be at least pretty equally balanced; and we are at liberty to retain our sentiments without being open to the charge

of gross absurdity. With respect to Marsh, however, we find upon turning to the notes on Michaelis, vol. I. p. 477, 2d. edit. that this critic, after giving the names of several eminent men, who adopted the principle of accommodation, as Clement of Alexandria, Kidder, Nicholls, Sykes, and Eckermann, expresses himself thus, “As this doctrine has not only such able advocates, but such able adversaries, *it is difficult to determine which side of the question we should adopt.* It seems however to be *at least a matter of doubt* whether the principle of accommodation can be admitted where the strong expressions are used—this was done,” &c. Could Mr. E. have read this passage? Or if he had, could he venture to say that its author, although inclined to doubt the correctness of the theory, had frankly acknowledged it to be *untenable*? It is a little curious that among the “European critics,” who with Mr. E. reject the principle of accommodation, is “the venerable Surenhusius” himself,* whose name makes so con-

* Surenhusius was a Dutch professor and critic of distinguished learning. He is mentioned very re-

spicuous a figure in his book. He, it seems, is of opinion, that when this form of quotation *that it might be fulfilled* is used in the New Testament, something more is invariably intended than allusion or accommodation.*

But setting aside authority, "it can be proved," continues Mr. English, "not to be so from the New Testament itself." The proof is, that the apostle John in his account of the death of Jesus represents him as saying, *I thirst*, in order to fulfil a prophecy, and it was, as he thinks, unsuitable in John to say

respectfully by Marsh, in his notes upon Michaelis, and by other authors of eminence. Among other works, he published an edition of the Hebrew Mishna, at Amsterdam, 1698, which Clarke (Bibliog, Dict.) styles a very valuable and well edited work. The ten traditional rules of interpretation, mentioned by Mr. E. after his master Collins, are stated to be rules of *Jewish doctors*. Whatever suspicion, therefore, they may throw upon Jewish writings and Jewish traditions, they can have nothing to do with Christ and his apostles, whose quotations from scripture may be satisfactorily explained in another way, and who declared the whole system of Jewish traditions to be utterly false.

* Michaelis, vol. I. p. 479.

that his master uttered words, by which he only gave occasion for the remark that a passage of scripture was thus verified. I see nothing unsuitable or disrespectful in all this. The apostle does not say that the words were uttered in order to accomplish a *prophecy*. He only says, that by these words a scripture, or a passage of scripture was verified. The passage is applied in the same manner in which he soon after applies to him another passage, relating to the paschal lamb, *a bone of him shall not be broken*, which I suppose no person in his senses ever suspected to be a prophecy.

To make out the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah of the Old Testament, we are now bound to show that certain clear and intelligible predictions of Moses and the prophets were literally fulfilled in him. Of these it would be easy to produce a great number; but as the argument does not require this, and as I would avoid swelling this book to an unreasonable size, I shall select a few of those which are mentioned by Mr. E. and are not considered by him as conclusive.

Let it be remembered that the point which is peremptorily denied by this writer, and was denied by the Jewish doctors, and was the object for which our Saviour perpetually appealed to the scriptures, is, that a suffering state of the Messiah was to precede his triumph.

In the 18th Deut. 15—20, we have these words of Moses. “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren like unto me, unto him shall ye hearken according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord in Horeb,” &c. “And the Lord said unto me they have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him, and it shall come to pass that whoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.” As this passage is taken from a chapter in which Moses is giving directions to the Israelites in what manner to conduct themselves after taking possession of the land of Canaan, and to avoid the super-

stitious practices of the inhabitants, particularly in consulting necromancers and diviners ; a reader might be led to infer that Moses intended to convey no other idea than that the Lord would raise up and send to them true prophets, from whom, and not from heathen necromancers, they should learn his will. At the same time this inference would be rendered extremely doubtful by the peculiar force of the expressions, "*a prophet like unto me*," words which indicate not a common man, or a succession of common prophets, but a particular individual possessing the same high character, qualifications and powers with Moses himself ; like him a messenger from heaven, the founder of a religion, the mediator of a covenant between God and man, endowed with supernatural gifts, admitted to a peculiar and intimate intercourse with the Deity. Now upon consulting the historical books of the Old Testament, we find that no person had appeared between the death of Moses and the latest date of these histories, not even excepting Joshua, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, or any prophets, who verified this prediction ; and it

is expressly said by those who affixed the concluding paragraph to the book of Deuteronomy, that “Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, and the people hearkened to him and did as the Lord commanded Moses ; *But there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses*, whom the Lord knew face to face in all the signs and wonders which *the Lord sent him to do.*” The conclusion therefore would be either that this was not the true meaning of the words, or that Moses referred to some distinguished individual, who should appear at some very remote period.

The doubt is removed from my mind by referring to the following language of Peter, Acts iii. 20—24, after he had received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. “And he shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the time of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto your fathers a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me ; him shall ye hear in

all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." Jesus of Nazareth, then, according to St. Peter is the person foretold by Moses. And if his authority is to be admitted in the case, the passage in question is a real prophecy *literally* applicable to our Saviour, and not *figuratively* applicable to a *succession* of prophets immediately subsequent to the time of Moses.

Mr. English denies that this is a prediction of the Messiah, in which opinion he is countenanced by Michaelis, Dr. Priestley, and the modern Jews ; and opposed by numerous critics, and, which he will probably hear with some surprise, by the ancient Jews themselves. There had prevailed for several centuries before the birth of Jesus a firm belief that God, in consequence of this promise, was about to send to them a great prophet, who should unfold the hidden meaning of the scriptures, explain the prophecies, and the real design of the rites and ceremonies of the law. A variety of ancient Jewish authorities are given by

Chandler, in his "defence of Christianity," which show that this prophet mentioned by Moses was at that time believed to signify the Messiah.* It appears to have been their opinion that "the knowledge of the prophecies would be taken from them and be lost with the Hebrew their native tongue; but the Messias would restore to them the understanding of both and open the sealed book." This prophet is probably alluded to in I. Maccabees, iv. 46. "And they laid the stones in the mountain of the temple in a convenient place till *there should come a prophet,*" &c. Again, xiv. 41, "The Jews and priests were well pleased that Simon should be their governor and high priest forever until *there should arise a faithful prophet.*" When John the Baptist made his appearance in Judea as a teacher of righteousness, the priests and Levites came to him with this question—*art thou that prophet?* When the people saw the

* Chandler, page 307; et seq.

Fieri non potest, says one of these Rabbins, quin surgat aliquando similis propheta Mosi, vel major ei. Rex enim Messias erit similis ei aut major.

miracles of Jesus, they said one to another *this is in truth that prophet which was to come*. "I know," says the woman of Samaria, "that when the Messiah is come *he will teach us all things*. Come," said she to the men of her city, "and see a man who told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Messiah?"

We are justified, therefore, in considering this passage, applied by the apostle Peter to Jesus as a real prophecy of the Messiah. Indeed if it should even be interpreted of a succession of prophets, beginning at the time of Moses, it must include the Messiah, who was one, and the most distinguished of that succession. If this be admitted, and I see not how it can reasonably be denied, the question will be, whether Jesus of Nazareth was that great prophet like unto Moses, who was expected with so much enthusiasm? Jesus like his predecessor was a messenger from the Supreme Being to mankind; he came to make known to them the will of God, and to prescribe rules for their felicity; he had the same authority, the same qualifications, the

same right to be obeyed. He was the head of a new dispensation, the mediator of a new covenant ; he taught men how to render an acceptable service to their Creator ; he delivered a system of doctrines, statutes, and ordinances adapted to keep alive and cherish the most exalted reverence of God, and to make this the grand and constant principle of human conduct ; he performed the most astonishing miracles ; he enjoyed the most intimate communion with the Deity ; he was in a certain sense *in God and God in him* ; he spake the words which God taught him ; he performed the works of God. Thus far Jesus of Nazareth was like unto Moses, but he was a greater prophet than Moses. His character was unblemished ; it was a perfect model of moral beauty ; the imagination can conceive of nothing more faultless associated with human nature. The character of Moses was marked with dark shades ; he was sometimes disobedient ; he incurred the divine displeasure, and met his punishment. Jesus delivered a moral system, not imperfect, like that of the Jewish lawgiver, not armed with temporal sanctions,

nor intended to restrain merely the external conduct, not confined to a particular nation ; but adapted to all the conditions and wants of man, addressed to the heart as well as the manners, sanctioned by the strongest motives that can be offered to human beings, and intended to improve and bless all the nations of the earth. Moses sunk into the grave and saw corruption ; Jesus ascended, the conqueror of death, in triumph to heaven.

But Mr. E. has two very important objections to the application of this prophecy to Jesus. He thinks that he could not have been the expected prophet, and that the Jews were therefore bound to reject him ; because in the first place he taught doctrines that led to idolatry, and of course did not answer to the test given to determine the merit of claims like his ; and in the second place, because his instructions were contrary to the laws of Moses. The reader will be curious to know how this singular charge, that the Christian religion encourages idolatry, is supported ; for all Christians know that if Jesus taught any thing with peculiar emphasis, it was, that the Supreme

Being was the sole object of religious homage; and that the principal object of his mission was to make known this great truth to all mankind, and to put an end to every species of idolatry. We are referred, however, to a copious collection of passages in the New Testament* from which the writer ventures to draw this conclusion, that religious homage is there directed to be paid to other beings than God, and consequently there is internal evidence against the divine authority of the religion itself and of its founder. How they, who believe that Jesus, a being distinct from God, and commonly styled in the scriptures the Son of God, can be entitled to the same kind of adoration with the Deity himself, will vindicate themselves from this charge of Mr. E. is an affair with which I have no sort of concern. For myself, I am perfectly satisfied that his conclusion is false; that the doctrine here stated has no foundation whatever in the scriptures; that all the texts, which he, and much greater men than he, have torn from their proper places and connexion, and brought

* Page 131.

together so as to make them appear to speak this language, only serve to show the ineffable weakness of the cause they are meant to support.

Jesus taught in the most explicit manner the great and fundamental principle of the Jewish religion, the unity and unrivalled excellence of God. He taught it in the very words of the law. "The first of all the commandments is, Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is *one* Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul." He addressed his own prayers to Jehovah and taught his disciples to follow his example. He knew their expectations that God would send them a prophet like unto Moses, and he told them plainly that God had sent *him*; that he came from God, was instructed by God, was sanctified by God; that what he was, and possessed and hoped, was derived from God; that God was the common Father of him and his disciples. He told the Jews that they were bound to honour him the messenger, as well as the Father who sent him; not that they must confound his

idea in their minds with the idea of a Being, who, according to his own declaration, was *greater than he* ; nor that they must pay that exalted adoration, which is due only to the great Father of the universe, to himself, the *fairest* work of the Deity be it admitted, but still *a work of the Deity*, who, like any other created being, without God was nothing. He never did teach them to address religious worship to himself. He told them, and no language can be plainer, that “in that day,” meaning after he left the world, “they should ask him nothing, but whatsoever they should *ask the Father in his name* should be given them.” It was an atrocious calumny of the Jewish scribes, who hated him, “that he being a man made himself God.”* They affected to understand his remarkable assertion “*I and my Father are one*,” which means nothing more than that the will of his Father was his will, that they were one in *design, intention, object*—as it is understood by numerous Christians at the present day. But he repelled the charge with indignation. “Is it

* John x. 33.

not written," said he to the Jews, "in your law, *I said ye are gods?* If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came"—David, Solomon, the prophets, &c.—"say ye of him, whom the Father *hath sanctified and sent into the world*, thou blasphemest because I said"—not that I am God, or that even the title which is given in scripture to David, &c. is applicable to me, but only that—"I am the *Son of God.*"

When he had left the world, and the cause in defence of which he died was taken up by the apostles, what did they say to the people? Did they say that the Eternal God himself had appeared on earth in a visible form, or that the second person in the Godhead, a being equal in nature, attributes, and privileges, had submitted to death, and was entitled to equal honors and worship with the Father? This is what they said. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the deter-

minate counsel and foreknowledge of God; ye have taken and with wicked hands have crucified and slain, whom God hath raised up. Acts ii. 22.—therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, &c.—therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ.—The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers hath glorified his son Jesus. Acts iii. 13.—Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea and all that in them is—of a truth against *thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed*, both Herod and Pontius Pilate were gathered together, &c.. Acts iv. 24.—There is but one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. I. Tim. ii. 5.—For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.—Then cometh the end when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith he hath put all things under him, it is manifest that he is excepted who put all things under

him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject to him, who did put all things under him, that God may be all in all." Cor. xv. 21, &c.

Now by what is all this plain language to be set aside, and the doctrine, considered by Mr. E. idolatrous, substituted in its place? I will not say as I think, *by nothing, absolutely nothing*; because it is an essential part of the creed of so large a body of Christians, and so many works have been written in its defence, and it has been fortified by so many establishments, institutions, and formularies; that it should seem at least that some plausible things could be advanced in its favour. But it may be said with truth, that this sentiment, for which so many texts have been collected, is utterly irreconcilable upon any rational principles, with the above most explicit declarations of Christ and his apostles; and when its intelligent advocates are compelled, on that account, to treat it as an inexplicable mystery, it is time to consider whether so obscure a doctrine does in fact rest upon

the New Testament ; whether since it is admitted to be taught indirectly and by inference rather than by positive assertion, there is not some very serious misunderstanding of the passages from which the inference is derived ; whether a different construction of the passages will not perfectly reconcile them with what we all admit to be fundamental principles of religion ; and whether the construction, which produces this harmony, is not the real meaning of the sacred writers. It is not necessary to go into the Trinitarian controversy, because the principal points of it are now very well understood. It is only necessary to say in answer to Mr. E. that most of the men of real learning among us, the profound and judicious critics, are satisfied, from a very thorough investigation of the scriptures, that divine honours are not there directed to be paid to Jesus of Nazareth, or to any other being than the God and Father of Jesus and of all mankind ; that what he states to be a doctrine of Christianity is an error, which must be abandoned to its fate. Now if the

sentiment has no foundation in scripture, the objection is extinguished.*

The other objection is, that Jesus taught doctrines contrary to the law of Moses.† But the truth is, the Mosaic ritual was never intended in all its parts to be perpetual, nor from the nature of the thing could it have been so. Not to insist upon the express declaration of Jeremiah,‡ on which Paul founds an argument in the epistle to the Hebrews—"behold the days come saith the Lord when I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, *not according to the covenant*

* I cannot avoid expressing my regret, that in the sermons and other tracts, which are frequently published in defence of the Trinity, the writers should persevere in quoting texts of scripture precisely as they stand in the common version, *without hinting at the doubts which have been entertained of their accuracy, or of their applicability to the doctrine itself.* Certainly they must know that this is not only doubted, but peremptorily denied by Christian divines of unquestionable ability and integrity, and that if what these divines say is true, it is fatal to their cause. Why do they shrink from these criticisms?

† See Chapter xi.

‡ Ch. xxxi. 31.

that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt," nor upon other passages to the same effect, there is this plain reason: why the peculiar rites of their law were designed at some future period to be done away. Their great object was to keep the people completely distinct and separate from the superstitious nations who surrounded them, and to counteract their strong propensities to idolatry. For this purpose a variety of ceremonies were instituted, which in themselves had no particular value, but were useful as they served to occupy their minds, and to form habits of obedience to the Supreme Being. While, therefore, this inclination to idolatry continued, and while they remained in a state of separation from all the rest of mankind, the prescriptions of the ritual were in force as it respects them, and were intended to be strictly observed. But that a time would come, when they should neither be idolaters, nor be the sole church and people of the Supreme Being, is the incessant theme of all their prophets. They taught that all the nations of

the earth would, at some future period, be blessed in the seed of Abraham; that the name of Jehovah would be great among the Gentiles from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same; that in every place under heaven incense should be offered to his name and a pure offering; that this messenger of the new covenant, this promised Messiah, instead of being a mere king of the Jews a restorer of the tribes of Jacob,* was to sustain the more glorious character of the king, the light, the joy, the salvation, of all the ends of the earth. The moment this new covenant was promulgated, and the wall of partition, as St. Paul terms it, was broken down between the Jews and the Gentiles, the great object for which the ritual was established, and consequently the ritual itself was at an end. A partial and exclusive scheme was manifestly unfit for this new state of things; it was im-

* Isaiah xlix. 6. "It is a *light thing* that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will, also, give thee *for a light to the Gentiles* that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth."

practicable, it was useless. If therefore God did intend that all mankind should form one great family of true worshippers, bound together by common ties and animated by one hope; it is clear that he must have intended that all those usages, those mere positive institutions, those distinctions for instance of meats, times, places, forms, which served only to confine this great privilege to one nation, should eventually be abolished.

All the great principles of the Mosaic law, those which were intrinsically good, those which were essential to human improvement and happiness, were taught far more distinctly by Jesus than by the Jewish doctors. All those parts of the law and the writings of the prophets which had any relation to himself were fulfilled by him. But he certainly pressed these great moral principles upon his followers with peculiar earnestness. He said very little about the mere ceremonial observances of the ritual. He uttered the most severe censures respecting those people, who ascribed great importance to inferior and indifferent forms, and none at all to the precepts.

which tended to promote internal purity. Some of these things which were deemed by the Jews indispensable, as for instance strict abstinence from all employment on the Sabbath day, he openly neglected ; and if he did not declare as plainly as it was afterward done by the apostles, that the old dispensation was superceded by one that was more perfect, we must remember that the principal design of his discourses was to establish his authority with his countrymen as a divine teacher ; the entire object of his mission was not understood till he had risen from the dead ; then the disciples were directed and qualified to explain it both to Jews and Gentiles. Mr. E. is therefore mistaken in asserting that the perpetuity of the Jewish ritual in all its parts was explicitly taught by Jesus Christ, and that on this point St. Paul and his Master were at variance.

If further evidence is wanted of the fulfilment of this prophecy of Moses in Jesus of Nazareth, read the solemn denunciation with which it is accompanied ;—“and it shall come to pass that whoever will not hearken to my words, which he shall speak in my name,

I will require it of him.” Or, as it stands in Acts—“and it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people.” Jesus came to his own, and his own received him not. They resisted the most complete and convincing evidence that ever was offered to man; they dishonoured the prophet and the great God who sent him; they refused to hear his words; they were filled with rage at his very innocence; they pursued him with frantic barbarity to the grave. “His blood,” said they, “be on us and on our children.” And the vengeance of heaven has fallen upon that wretched people. It is impossible to describe or conceive what they have suffered. What are they among mankind? They are, as Moses foretold they would be,* “an astonishment, a proverb and a byeword among all the nations whither the Lord has led them. They are scattered among all people from the one end of the earth even to the other, and among these nations they have found no ease, neither has the sole of their foot had rest, but

* See the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy.

the Lord has given them there a trembling heart, and sorrow of mind. The Lord has made their plagues wonderful, the Lord has caused them to be smitten before their enemies. And it has come to pass that as the Lord rejoiced over them to do them good and to multiply them, so he has rejoiced over them to destroy them and bring them to nought, and to pluck them from off their land." What has become of the proud city Jerusalem and of its ancient splendor? Fallen, as Jesus predicted; trodden under foot by Gentiles—the seat of mourning and desolation and misery.* "What have ye done, ungrateful men," says Bossuet, "slaves in every country and under every prince? Still ye serve not other gods, why then has your God forgotten you? What crime, what atrocity more heinous than idolatry has brought upon you a punishment which even your idolatries did not bring upon you? Ye are silent. Ye see not what makes your God inexorable.

* *Periit infelix urbs cum sua gente; et etiamnum manet utriusque desolatio, veracis Prophetæ triste monumentum.*

Burnet de fide & off

Then recollect the words of your fathers, "we will have no king but Cæsar." Be it so. The Messiah shall not be your king. Continue slaves to Cæsar, slaves to the sovereigns of the earth, till the church shall be filled with Gentiles; then only shall Israel be saved."—Are we now to ask whether Moses and Jesus Christ were *prophets*?

In the 52d and 53d chapters of Isaiah the character and sufferings of the Messiah are described with a degree of minuteness which is astonishing. Mr. E. it seems knew that Paley had put the argument upon this single prophecy, and it was a hardy undertaking to endeavour to set aside what that illustrious writer had considered as so perfectly unanswerable. The whole question relating to the Messiahship of Jesus may very safely be rested upon these two chapters; and if any person, whose mind is not strangely distorted by prejudices, will barely give himself the trouble to read them—no *labour* is necessary, no critical attention, no research; because there are no difficulties in the case, and the language is intelligible—if he will barely read them, so

many circumstances in the life of Jesus will immediately present themselves to his recollection, so many *minute* circumstances, so many things *peculiar* to him and to no other person that has ever existed, that he will have no doubt of either of these three points—that the writing itself is a real prophecy, that it is a prophecy of the Messiah, that it was fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth.

The ancient Jewish doctors, as it appears from Chandler, who examined this matter thoroughly, expounded these chapters of the Messiah. But the modern Jews, who since their dispersion seem to have become more firm in their errors, and whose hatred of Christianity has been inflamed and rendered invincible by their sufferings, have employed their whole ingenuity to give the prophecy a different meaning. They have explained it as referring to the Jewish nation, to Josiah, to Jeremiah, to Rabbi Juda, to Rabbi Simeon ;—but all to no purpose. It is a difficulty out of which all their sturdiest efforts, and all their ten traditional rules of interpretation as detected by Surenhusius, and all their glosses

and paraphrases cannot extricate them. The passage has descended to us free from any essential corruption, free from allegorical phraseology or obscure allusion, and its authority is admitted by friends and enemies. It is indeed a *carnificina Rabbiorum*, and it would be honourable to the Jews if more of them would candidly acknowledge *Esaias tacuisset*.* Of the real meaning of the passage we are as well qualified to judge as our adversaries, and even if it were less intelligible than it is, we know that it was applied *as a prophecy of the Messiah* to Jesus, both by himself and by the apostle Philip; and are the suspicious interpretations of the professed enemies of our religion to be opposed to that of two persons who could demonstrate their divine authority by miracles?

In Mr. English's judgement this prophecy refers to the Jewish nation in their suffering and persecuted state, and in their ultimate emancipation and happiness. And there can be no stronger proof of the distress to which the Jewish commentators are reduced, than in

* See Paley.

their paraphrase of these chapters which he has copied from Vitringa, and which that critic very cautiously observes “ *is not to be despised.*” The leading ideas in the prophecy are, that the person who is to suffer is innocent ; that he is afflicted not on his own account but that of others ; that he is to be exalted and rewarded in consequence of his undeserved sufferings. Now how can all this be applied with any justice to the Jews ?— That people whose monstrous depravity is displayed in such vivid colours by the prophets and by their own historian Josephus ? A people favoured by God above all nations, blessed with the most enviable privileges and the most ample means of felicity ; and guilty in proportion to their advantages ? For whose transgressions were they wounded ? Whose sins did they bear ? Who are to be healed by their stripes ? They were afflicted for their own sins, and their punishment was as dreadful as their prosperity had been glorious. Are the Gentiles to be healed by their stripes ?—The people by whom they have been trodden under foot, the instruments of their misery, on

whom it is their earnest prayer that the Almighty would recompense their sufferings, and whom they hope at some future period to see in their chains? Has the Jewish nation been exalted, or is it to be exalted in consequence of its unmerited sufferings? If these people are ever restored to their former prosperity, it will be in consequence of a thorough reformation in opinions and morals; in consequence of having their pollutions washed away by severe discipline and repentance; in consequence of the promise of God to their ancestors and of his infinite mercy.

But Mr. English presents us with an ingenious method of getting over these difficulties. The Jews, as he tells us, insist that the prophet here uses the language of the Gentiles, that he means to represent them as saying to one another, Who hath believed *our* report, &c.—*we* (the Gentiles) hid as it were our faces from *him* (the Jews) &c. And to explain such passages as “he was wounded for *our* transgressions,” the preposition *by* must be substituted instead of *for*—he was wounded *by* our transgressions. As all this is entirely

fanciful, as it does not appear to be countenanced even by the shadow of an argument ; as Isaiah is addressing a prophecy to his countrymen, and gives no hint of putting words into the mouth of Gentiles, and as the liberties here taken with the words of the prophecy are wholly unjustifiable ; it is difficult to say what could have induced this writer to admit such an interpretation. Even the Rabbinical rules, with which he makes himself so merry at page 29, can hardly justify it. If he were to add to them these two valuable canons, first, *take care to have recourse to convenient personifications and other figures of speech when your purpose requires it ;* secondly, *if an unmanageable preposition comes in your way, be sure to put another in its place,* then indeed the prophecies or any other writings may be made to signify any thing. The reader would have hardly suspected, that a person who so pointedly condemns this dishonest mode of interpreting scripture when he believes the apostles concerned in it, should condescend to employ it for his own purposes.

But why cannot this be a prophecy of the Messiah? "Because the Messiah of the Old Testament was not to *suffer* but to live and reign."* Now this is the very point in dispute, a point which is placed beyond all question by this very prophecy. We have already seen that from the nature of the work to be executed by the Messiah, the Jews could not be right in their expectation of a mere temporal prince; that if the world was to be delivered from a state of sin and misery, it must be done by means adapted to remove the moral causes of that state; that consequently the deliverer himself could not be a mere conqueror, who should exalt the Jewish nation by giving them victory over their temporal enemies; but a prophet who should purify the hearts of all mankind by his precepts and his spiritual influence. This being true therefore, the sufferings of the deliverer at his first appearance could not have been avoided. He must have set himself against practices and principles which were cherished with supreme affection by the greater part of mankind.

* Page 44.

His instructions would have filled the proud, the powerful, the worldly-minded, the vicious with the most violent indignation. They would have opposed him with their whole strength. He would *have been despised and rejected* by them, *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*. He would have been *led as a lamb to the slaughter* and would have *poured out his soul unto death*. All this we know to have been true of Jesus of Nazareth; and there is another part of the prophecy which could have been fulfilled *only* by him, and which during his life was unintelligible even by his own disciples.

It is expressly stated that this righteous sufferer, after the days of his trial were ended *by his death*, should *see his seed*, should *prolong his days*, and *the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands*. Now nothing could explain this but the fact of the resurrection. Jesus accordingly taught his followers that this was the meaning of the prophecy; but their minds were too feeble, or too much affected by prejudices of a different kind to comprehend him. He rose from the grave

and ascended into heaven. In this manner
 “God hath highly exalted him and given him
 a name that is above every name, that at the
 name of Jesus every knee should bow and
 every tongue confess him Lord to the glory
 of God the Father.” Has he not *seen his*
*seed**—the multitude of sincere disciples who
 obey his precepts and worship God in his
 name? Have not *his days been prolonged*?
 He is now the living head and guardian of his
 church, and his existence will have no end.
 Hath not the pleasure of the Lord prospered
 in his hand? Let any person consider the
 progress and beneficial effects of Christianity,
 the nations which it has converted from idol-

*“We will not permit the word *seed* to be spiritualized on this occasion, for the word *seed* in the Old Testament means nothing else than *literally children*.”
 P. 49. I know not whether it is Mr. E. himself or the Jews, who will not permit the great body of our critics to be heard on this subject. Perhaps a Rabbinical authority may have some weight. “Rabbi Alshek,” says Chandler, “interprets *seed* here by *disciples*, such as addict themselves to his religion who converted them; and so it is used in the Jewish writings for those who imitate the manners of their teacher.”

atry to the worship of Jehovah, the barbarism which it has subdued, the kind affections which it has inspired and cherished ; let him consider not merely its effects upon prevailing manners and practices, but the light it has thrown upon moral principles and systems ; the noble views it has given of the Supreme Being, and the nature of virtue, and our obligations and our duty ; the value it has given to life, and to human efforts, and human improvement ; the innumerable multitudes of human beings, whom it has raised from despair and encouraged to be useful ;—let him consider this, and he will be satisfied that the prediction is accomplished ; and he will blush for a writer who is capable of asserting, that Christianity is unworthy of God, and that its author did not aim to promote peace and good will among men.

There is only one other prophecy, of which it is necessary to take notice, and which Mr. E. has made some feeble efforts to set aside as of no value in this controversy. It is the celebrated prophecy *of the seventy weeks*, beginning at Daniel ix. 24, to the end of the

chapter, and the principal ideas in it are these. The prophet is informed from God, of the time, when the promised Messiah should appear and the Jewish dispensation should be completed. He is told that seventy weeks are determined upon the Jews and their city to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to anoint the most holy ;—that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the prince, should be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks (69 weeks)—that after the 62 weeks succeeding the seven, the Messiah should be cut off, and the city and sanctuary should be destroyed with a terrible destruction—that the Messiah should confirm the covenant with many for one week and in the midst of the week should cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease.

It is agreed on all sides that the weeks here spoken of are weeks of *years* and not of *days* ; because the latter supposition would obviously leave too short a time to accomplish a work

of such magnitude ; and because the former is a mode of reckoning not unusual in the scriptures ;—as for instance Levit. xxv. 8. “Thou shalt number seven sabbaths or weeks of years, and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years.” It is agreed, therefore, that the seventy weeks are 490 years to be reckoned from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem. Now the principal difficulty, which seems to me to exist in the case, is to ascertain at what precise time this decree was issued.

There was a decree made in favour of the Jews two years after this prophecy was uttered, by Cyrus king of Persia, of which we have an account at the beginning of the book of Ezra. In consequence of this decree many of the people at that time in captivity were permitted to return to Jerusalem ; where they erected an altar and laid the foundation of the temple. This decree was made 538 years before the Christian æra. The work of rebuilding the city advanced however slowly till the 7th year of Artaxerxes when according to

Ezra, Ch. vii. 11, another decree was issued releasing the whole people from captivity and permitting them to establish themselves under an independent government. This was made 457 years before Christ. There was a third decree of the 20th year of Artaxerxes, 445 years before Christ, mentioned by Nehemiah, Ch. ii. 1, empowering him to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. We have here three commandments to restore and build Jerusalem; and if we compute the 490 years from the first decree of Cyrus we find they terminate in the 48th year before the birth of our Saviour; if we compute them from the seventh year of Artaxerxes, they end in the 33d year after the birth of Christ, *the very year in which he was crucified*; if we reckon them from the 20th of Artaxerxes, they end in the 45th year after Christ. At any rate we have a period of 93 years, the space between the first and the last of these terminations of the seventy weeks, in which period the great works mentioned in the prophecy are to be accomplished.

If at any time within this period events corresponding to this prophecy did take place;

if the Messiah did appear and confirm his covenant with the people, and was cut off, not for himself or on account of his own guilt, and did cause the sacrifice and oblation, or the Jewish ritual to cease ; and if after his death, the city and the sanctuary were destroyed under peculiar circumstances of horror ;—the prophecy may fairly be considered as fulfilled, even though in consequence of the obscurities attending ancient chronology we could not fix the exact years in which they severally happened. Now in this time Jesus of Nazareth appeared openly in Judea, claiming to be considered as the Deliverer foretold by the prophets ; he came to make reconciliation for iniquity and to bring in an everlasting righteousness. The facts relating to his life and character were most wonderful ; he defended his claims by proofs that were irresistible ; he was innocent by the confession of his enemies ; he was prematurely cut off by his own countrymen ; and within a few years after his death Jerusalem and its inhabitants were no more. Can any thing be plainer than all this ? Can any thing more be necessary to establish

the prophecy and its application? But we can make the thing still plainer.

Let us assume the decree of the seventh year of Artaxerxes, B. C. 457, when the whole Jewish nation returned from captivity and reestablished the government and law at Jerusalem—as the point from which these seventy weeks are to be reckoned. We are now according to the direction of the prophecy to compute seven weeks and threescore and two weeks, or 483 years, to the coming of the Messiah; during which time the city is to be completely rebuilt. This brings us to the 26th year after the birth of Jesus; before he began to reveal himself openly, but the very year in which his forerunner, John the Baptist, announced his speedy approach to the Jews. After this period *the Messiah was to be cut off*; but before his death, he was to *confirm the covenant with many for one week* and to be cut off *in the midst of that week*. The obvious meaning is, that during the space of one prophetic week he should disclose his message to mankind, confirm it to the conviction of many people, and be put to death. If

therefore we compute this week of seven years from the 26th. year of Christ, we find they terminate in his 33d year, the date of his crucifixion. During this period all these things were literally accomplished; and soon afterwards, or after the expiration of the whole seventy weeks the Jewish nation, with its worship and ritual and exclusive privileges, was swept away.

It is wonderful! And now is this great prophecy thus exactly fulfilled by our Saviour, to be overturned by the despicable carpings, and possible meanings, and false criticisms of Jewish Rabbins who are struggling and writhing under its weight? The fact is incontestible, that at this specific period pointed out by Daniel and admitted by all the ancient Jews to be the time in which the Messiah was to appear, the Christian religion, that most distinguished, greatest, best gift of God to man, —that gift worthy of so many predictions, and which so completely satisfied the most ardent hopes and expectations of an oppressed world, —was revealed in Judea by Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by miracles. Did

any other event of equal magnitude, followed by *consequences* of equal magnitude, take place within or near that period in any other part of the world? It is not pretended. Could any crime so justly bring upon the Jews that horrible desolation which it is agreed they did suffer, as the rejection and murder of their promised deliverer, the messenger of God, the Prince of Peace? It cannot be pretended. But because Mr. David Levi, and Mr. Wagenseil, and other keen-sighted Rabbies think they can explain all this very well of the high priest, or else of the Jewish priesthood, or else of Titus, or else of some other great man—the Christian interpretation of the prophecy is to be discarded as untenable!

I should think it unnecessary to say one word more on this subject, if there was not a remarkable passage at page 57, which ought not to be passed by in silence. The writer denies the possibility of applying this prediction to “the cutting off” of Jesus; and assigns this reason, which he declares with some apparent exultation has “laid flat the Christian interpretation at one stroke.” “The

Messiah," says he, " was to be cut off *after* the threescore and two weeks, i. e. *at* the destruction of Jerusalem, or within seven years preceding that event. Now we know from the evangelists and from profane history, that Jesus was crucified more than forty years *before* the destruction of Jerusalem." I have frequently had occasion to remark the surprising confidence with which many of this author's round assertions are delivered; but there is a rashness about this which is wholly unpardonable. If it were true that the prophecy seemed to require the death of the Messiah to take place at or within seven years of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the historians had fixed his death within *forty* years of that period; it would be absurd to consider this mere difference of time as affecting the general application of the prophecy. If the great facts are all applicable, the precise date can be of no importance. The truth however is, that the destruction of Jerusalem is distinctly foretold to happen *after* the cutting off of the Messiah and in consequence of

that event. The words are, “and after three score and two weeks the Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince *that shall come* shall destroy the city.”

The destruction of the city was to take place after the expiration of the whole seventy weeks, and was to terminate the series of events. The death of the Messiah was to take place within that period. The exultation of this writer appears therefore to be a little premature.

These prophecies are adduced to establish the great truth which Jesus inculcated so earnestly upon his disciples, and which in my opinion they do establish indisputably, that the Messiah of the old testament was to be a *prophet* and a *sufferer*. That the ancient, as well as the modern, Jews thought otherwise is very true; their opinions, however, let it be observed, were founded not upon the scriptures themselves, but upon a mass of traditional explanations of scripture, accumulated by a succession of theorists in different ages, and regarded with more profound reverence than the

written law.* It was important that this groundless error should be removed and the predictions necessary to remove it be particularly brought forward and pressed upon their minds ; because these were the only predictions which could have been fulfilled in their time, and in which they could have been concerned. They lived at the commencement of a new dispensation which was to continue through a long course of ages ; it was revealed to them in the first place as the peculiar people of God ; they were to be the first sharers of its privileges. The dispensation was not, according to the prophets, to begin with the triumph, but with the humiliation of its Author ; and therefore the predictions relating to his regal splendour on earth, were not applicable to their time, but to a far distant period. The existing

* " It was a maxim among them," says Collyer, (Sac. Interp. vol. 2. p. 22) " that it is a greater sin to act in contradiction to the word of scribes, than of the written law, and that the former ought to be more attended to than the latter, the written law being as the body or clothing but the unwritten as the soul."

generation were competent judges only of those particular prophecies which were actually accomplished within their own observation.

Now let us carry this idea along down to our own times, and we shall perceive that though we live in an advanced period of this dispensation, we have not yet reached its end ; and therefore must be imperfect judges of the meaning and application of any predictions that are to be accomplished hereafter. The only thing which concerns us, is to know whether those prophecies relating to this great dispensation, the accomplishment of which can in reason be expected to have fallen within the last two thousand years, have actually been verified. Now we may in reason expect that Jesus of Nazareth should be a sufferer ; that his sufferings and state of humiliation should terminate with his death ; that after that event he should in some way or other be raised by God to a state of glory ; that under the care of the Supreme Being his kingdom and his glory should advance among mankind ; that if all the good effects which are intended to result from the dispensation have not in

this time taken place, at least so many of them should have taken place, as are necessary to establish its beneficent object and character. Need I inform a Christian that thus much has been strictly fulfilled?

There is no very serious difficulty in this subject, if we take care to separate the prophecies which *ought* to have been accomplished before our time, and those which ought *not* to have been so. The art of Mr. English, as we have seen, consists in throwing them all into one confused mass, and referring them all to the natural, though prolonged life of a single man. Of those which yet remain to be verified we ought to speak with caution. It would be too much to define the precise facts and states of society, which are many ages hence to fulfil the figurative and most splendid language of the Jewish prophets. We may imagine all this, and there can be no harm perhaps in these mere excursions of fancy. But the conjecture of one man is about as important as that of another.—If I were to frame a conjecture upon the subject, it would be this. The Christian religion will prevail over the

whole earth ; and the state of society will be meliorated, and the human character formed and improved by its principles. The Jews, when the cup of their deserved afflictions is full, and the period of their exile is completed, will be re-established in their ancient country under a prince of the lineage and perhaps the name of David. They will be Christians, the head of the Christian world, and their king and his successors the most distinguished of Christian princes. When the world is thus brought under the influence of Christianity, and Jerusalem is made the principal seat of this universal religion, then the prophecies relating to the triumphant state of the Messiah on earth will be accomplished. Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant will see from his celestial abode all human beings worshipping the great Jehovah in his name ; living by his precepts, preparing themselves to be removed by death into the immediate presence of himself and his Father, where their improvement and felicity will advance forever. This is my conjecture. In a matter of mere *guessing*, I suppose my authority

may be of as much value as that of Mr. English himself.

This writer in summing up his arguments against the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, has condensed the substance of them into these four principal heads.* 1. Because the prophecies admitted on both sides to relate to the Messiah were not so plainly and *sensibly* accomplished in Jesus as to prove him to be that person. 2. Because Christians have applied predictions to him which were not predictions of him, but of some other person in whom they had previously been verified. 3. Because Christians have applied the prophecies not in their simple, and literal, and natural sense, but in a spiritual, mystical, metaphorical sense. 4. Because admitting that some passages of prophetic scripture must be figuratively taken, yet Christians apply them in a sense *directly contrary* to the import of the words in their first signification; and the prophecies thus appealed to can be of no service to their cause, till a kingdom *of* this world and *not* of this world, contempt and

* Page 64, note.

adoration, a cross and a throne, &c. are reconciled and mean the self-same thing. It is fortunate that he has thus brought his arguments into one view, because we now know exactly the points which involve the real strength of his cause, and upon which he himself has placed it; and also because there can be no pretence that the material things in the book have been inadvertently or wilfully overlooked. Now if I have been successful in my attempt to refute this writer, it has appeared distinctly, that intelligible and undoubted prophecies of the Messiah were plainly, and sensibly, and completely fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth;—that predictions which have no reference to the Messiah but to other individuals are of no value in the case, and need not to be alleged;—that the same thing is true of those which apply to the Messiah only in a mystical and spiritual sense;—that a state of suffering and a consequent state of triumph, a cross and a throne, a kingdom on earth and a kingdom in heaven, are perfectly consistent with the prophecies of the Old Testament relating to the Messiah. It has appeared also, that this

foundation of Christianity, strong as it is, is not the only one on which that system was placed by its author; and that even if this could be shaken by infidels, the divine authority of the religion itself and its obligations and its sanctions would remain impregnable. Let it be particularly observed that as we know not on what prophecies of the Old Testament Jesus himself rested his claims; as we only know that he constantly appealed to those books and that his appeals were convincing; —it is enough if we can find in the books to which he appealed *any clear* predictions that without doubt were verified in him. This, if I mistake not has been done, and if it has, the question is at rest.

I have endeavoured to furnish an answer to this book that should be level with the apprehensions of all readers. There was no occasion for a display of learning, or a discussion of nice points of criticism. It is indeed a subject which would have permitted me with perfect ease to scatter over these pages at proper intervals a number of long and rough Dutch names, and a variety of Hebrew and Greek

quotations. But it was a question to be determined by plain facts and common sense, and not by authority. It is probable that very few of the sentiments which have been advanced will be new to theologians ; and to them my excuse is, that notwithstanding Mr. English's pretensions to novelty, I was compelled to say something upon a subject which has long been exhausted. To other readers they may be new and perhaps useful.

The subsequent part of the volume I leave to be answered by those who think it worth their while to repel the misrepresentations and abuse with which almost every page is disgraced ; and who can restrain their indignation more effectually than I can do. Let any person, who feels himself staggered by the peremptory tone and manner of Mr. English, take the New Testament and read it carefully. Let him observe the originality, the consistency, the strength, greatness, and excellence of the character of Jesus, and he will know how to estimate the charge which is here made against him, of intellectual weakness and enthusiasm. Let him read what is

said of St. Paul, and what he himself has written ; let him observe his disinterested zeal, his sincerity, his unconquerable love of truth and of his Master, his unwearied perseverance in a course in which he could gain no earthly recompense, his fearless defence of his principles at the hazard of all his earthly hopes and enjoyments ;—and he will be ashamed of a man who can repeat that despicable Jewish slander that all this was the consequence of mortified pride—that he abandoned the religion of his fathers because the High Priest refused him his daughter in marriage ! Let me put this home to Mr. English. Suppose some person who thinks as unfavourably of him as he does of St. Paul, should say, “ I know this young man ; his ruling foible is vanity. He came forward as a preacher expecting to be received with the most enthusiastic admiration. His expectations failed and in a fit of disgust and mortification he threw up his profession and published this foolish book.” Certainly it would be very wrong to say this, for I have no doubt it would be unjust. But Mr. English would be the

last person in the world who would have a right to complain of the injustice. Let him judge then of the emotions of a Christian at this treatment of those whom he delights to reverence.

A person who reads the New Testament with any attention will find himself at a loss to account for the severe censures which this writer has passed upon the Christian morality. He will see nothing there, which can justify such charges as these ;—that it requires man to live in a state of seclusion from society, and to subject himself to the most rigorous and unnecessary mortifications ; that its virtues are those which divide a man from his neighbour, and plunge him in melancholy and make him useless and unhappy ; that it debases the mind with overwhelming fears or intoxicates it with visionary hopes ; that it makes it a crime to offer to God a heart whose affections are shared by terrestrial objects ; and discourages the institution of marriage ! But it seems “ it is to no purpose to deny that Christianity recommends all this ; I say it *substantially* does.” I say it *does* ! Surely this writer must

be at least "six feet high, with the voice of an emperor,"* and a heart swelling like an air balloon with vanity. And yet notwithstanding the tremendous majesty with which these words are pronounced, there are those among us who think, that this is a representation of the Christian morality, the impiety of which is exceeded by nothing but its absurdity.

It is not a difficult thing for a dishonest man who examines the gospel merely for the sake of discovering petty discrepancies, blemishes and other subjects of malignant criticism; and who resolutely keeps out of sight the explanations which have been given of them by men of learning; to find matter enough for his purpose. He will find many errors in the common version of the bible; expressions that are obsolete, expressions that are figurative, obscure allusions, passages susceptible of various constructions, idiomatic and other difficulties. If he is either a malignant or an injudicious critic, he can represent the gospel if he pleases as a distorted object of terror and of disgust. But this species

* See page 174.

of hostility in the present improved state of theological information is understood at once. No man can attempt after the light which has been thrown upon real Christianity, and after what has been said and written in its defence, to deface its perfect purity or destroy its influence,—without hazarding his own reputation. It is indeed a system of admirable wisdom and excellence. Human nature can reach no higher perfection in this world than by acquiring its real spirit; human society can attain no greater felicity than by observing its precepts. It is true that it has been misunderstood and misrepresented by its friends as well as its enemies; but the errors of Shakers, Catholics, Calvinists, or any other denomination of Christians, are not to be confounded with Christianity, nor to be respected as truths from God. For myself, the views which I entertain of this most benevolent religion have filled my heart with joy; and in some circumstances of my life, as I desire to acknowledge with gratitude, have saved me from inexpressible agony. But of this enough.

The argument from authority, is not of itself sufficient to decide the controversy between us and the deists. But it is a consideration which ought to have great weight with those who have not means or leisure to examine the evidences of Christianity for themselves; that some of the greatest and best men that ever existed have searched this subject to the bottom, and have declared to the world and to posterity their most solemn conviction of its divine authority. I see not how an argument of this kind can be repelled by any person who is conscious that his opposition to Christianity is not the result of sufficient and impartial enquiry. He ought to suspect himself and the reasonings of ancient and modern infidels, when he perceives the religion of Jesus embraced by such minds—I will not say as that of our lamented friend BUCKMINSTER, because it may be insinuated that his eloquent testimony in its favour was required as a thing of course by his profession, but—as that of the late CHIEF JUSTICE PARSONS, that great man, who saw no equal among his countrymen, that incomparable mind

which seized, possessed, enlightened, the whole circle of human science.*

Nos tecta fovebimus ossa.

Violis et fronde frequenti

Titulumque et frigida saxa

Liquido spargemus odore. *Prud.*

While men of this character are eager to acknowledge that the Christian religion is from God ; can there be any thing to fear from the hostility of such a writer as Mr. English, who distrusting *his own* ability to assail the gospel with success, has stooped to arm himself with the envenomed arrows of its prostrate foes ?

With respect to the Jews whose sufferings have excited so much of this author's sympathy, and drawn from him so many bitter in-

* There was a tract written by JUDGE PARSONS in defence of the resurrection of Jesus, which I was once permitted to see. The scripture testimonies in its favour were compared and canvassed in the same manner and with the same ability with which he was accustomed to scrutinize testimony in judicial causes. If this manuscript has been preserved, I cannot but hope that his friends will think proper to give it to the public.

vectives against the whole body of Christians ;
 —while it is impossible not to pity the solita-
 ry and degraded condition of that people, it
 ought not to be forgotten that what they suf-
 fer is a righteous judgement of God, and will
 be the means of rectifying their errors and re-
 storing them to the divine favour. That
 Christianity enjoins or encourages their perse-
 cution, is a groundless calumny. It permits
 neither injurious actions nor an uncharitable
 spirit ; it speaks nothing but benevolence.
 The noble mind of St. Paul, notwithstanding
 their enmity and ingratitude, never forgot that
 they were his countrymen, and never ceased
 to pray earnestly for their conversion and
 prosperity. It is the duty of all Christians to
 follow his example. The Jews did what was
 in their power to obstruct the progress of our
 religion ; they failed ; they have dreadfully
 suffered for their hostility ; and all animosity
 should be extinguished. They have an un-
 questionable right to their opinions, though
 these opinions are errors ; and a Christian who
 endeavours to degrade them, or to drive them
 from what they consider their strong hold by

force, by terror, by calumny, by any other method than fair argument, has none of the spirit of his Master, and deserves not to bear his name. There are individuals of them, who are among the most estimable of human beings, and who would do honour to any country and to the most improved state of society. I have the pleasure of being known to such individuals ; and I am happy that it has fallen in my way to pay them this testimony of my respect ; and I hope they will accept it, if this book should attract their notice, as some apology for the harsh things which I have been compelled, in justice as I think, to say of their nation.

The Jews were once the peculiar people of God. The facts connected with their history are among the strongest proofs we possess of the interposition and agency of divine providence in the affairs of this world. They preserved for centuries the grand principle of our religion, the divine unity. They are the spiritual stock on which we have been grafted ; and it is in the seed of their ancestor Abraham that we and all the families of the earth shall

finally be blessed. We ought therefore with Grotius* to pray God—"ut Judæorum mentem sua luce collustret, et efficaces reddat preces quas ipse Christus jam in cruce pendens pro illis fudit;"—that he would enlighten their minds with his truth, and make the prayers effectual which Christ uttered for them, while he hung upon the cross.

* De veritate, lib. v.









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